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ASCLEPIUS

A COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE TESTIMONIES

PUBLICATIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE
THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

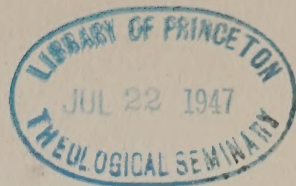
SECOND SERIES: TEXTS AND DOCUMENTS

VOLUME II

ASCLEPIUS

A COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE TESTIMONIES

II



ASCLEPIUS

A COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE TESTIMONIES

BY
EMMA J. EDELSTEIN
AND
LUDWIG EDELSTEIN

II



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II

INTERPRETATION OF THE TESTIMONIES

PREFACE

There is no generally accepted pattern that one is able to follow in studying any of the ancient deities, nor can the aims and methods of such an investigation be established on general grounds. The divine figures differ so essentially in their nature that the discussion of each of them raises different issues. Besides, the material available in every instance, by its quality and its peculiarity, enforces ever varying rules of analysis. The questions to be asked and the approach to be pursued, therefore, have to be derived from the examination of the object of inquiry. They cannot even be made explicit otherwise than by interpreting the data; their only basis is that afforded by the display of the evidence.

Under these circumstances it would be futile by way of a prefatory statement to formulate or to justify the task which has been evolved for this study of Asclepius, and the manner in which its solution has been sought. The interpretation must be left to speak for itself; it must find vindication or refutation by its results. I should point out in advance only those features which are due not to any singularity of the problem dealt with but rather to the subjective point of view of the interpreter.

No endeavor has been made to assign to Asclepius his proper place among the many deities of antiquity. Although his relation to other gods, and especially that to other healing deities, has occasionally been touched upon, Asclepius himself has remained the focus of attention. Furthermore, there has been no attempt to compare Greek views with primitive notions, or to relate the religious attitude of the Greeks and Romans to that characteristic of other periods or peoples; not even the Oriental transformations of the Asclepius figure have been studied. Finally, all theorizing regarding the origin of religion in general or of Greek religion in particular has been avoided. Human belief in gods, in divine and supernatural powers, has been taken simply as a fact to be acknowledged by the historian.

However, equal emphasis has been laid on the elucidation of realistic details and on the understanding of religious ideas. That is why account has been taken not merely of the character of Asclepius' godhead, of the sacred ritual of his worship, of the dissension between the Asclepius religion and Christianity; the medical activity of the god, the parapher-

nalía of his cult, the chance circumstances of the artistic representation of the deity, the architecture and history of his temples have been discussed as well. Thus the accent of the interpretation lies as much on the "how it was" as on the "what it meant."

In other words, although this book aims at an insight into the essence of the Asclepius figure and of the cult attached to him, it also intends to provide a commentary, as it were, on the whole ancient testimony on Asclepius preserved in books and on stone.¹

A few words concerning the composition of the second volume must be added. To give unity of thought and expression to the interpretation, it seemed advisable that only one of us should undertake the actual writing. Yet no solution was definitely accepted, no sentence received its final form, until we had together examined and weighed it. Nor is it only in this sense that the interpretation remains our common work. It would be difficult indeed for me to say in any one instance how far my views were shaped by these discussions, or how far I followed suggestions made by the partner in a dialogue that continued through several years.

As in the preparation of the first volume, Paul A. Clement assisted untiringly in the redaction of the second. He read the manuscript and improved it by proposing changes in language and by pointing to those problems that had not found adequate clarification. Owsei Temkin also went over the typescript. He cautioned me where I had been too hasty in my judgment, and he encouraged me to look further where I had been inclined to rest my case. The galley proofs were read by F. Michael Krouse who subjected the text to a close scrutiny and thus enabled me to remove deficiencies of the final wording. I ask all of them to accept my thanks for their help which they extended to me as friends and scholars.

L. E.

Baltimore,
March, 1945.

¹For a discussion of the principles according to which the material was collected, cf. the Preface to Vol. I. Every statement made in the analysis refers to the passage on which it is based by citing the number under which the testimony is listed in the volume of texts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. THE HERO ASCLEPIUS.....	1-64
1. The Homeric Asclepius.....	1-22
i. Asclepius' Heroic Rank: 2-10. ii. Machaon and Podalirius: 10-17. iii. Origin of the Asclepiads and of Asclepius: 17-22.	
2. The Heroic Legend.....	22-53
i. Reconstruction of the Hesiodic Version: 24-34.	
ii. The Meaning of the Legend: 34-53 (Parentage: 34-36; Birth Legend and Education: 34-38; Heroic Deeds: 38-43; Earthly Life and Career: 43-46; Death: 46-50; Tomb: 50; Star: 50-51; Summary: 52-53).	
3. Asclepius the Hero of Physicians.....	53-64
II. THE GOD ASCLEPIUS.....	65-138
1. The Divine Myth.....	67-76
2. The Nature of Asclepius' Godhead.....	76-91
3. Time and Place of Asclepius' Deification..	91-101
4. The Range of Asclepius' Power.....	101-108
5. The Rise of the Asclepius Religion.....	108-125
i. Religious Reasons: 111-118. ii. Non-religious Influences: 119-125.	
6. The Teaching of Asclepius.....	125-131
7. Asclepius and Christ.....	132-138
III. TEMPLE MEDICINE.....	139-180
1. Modern Explanations of Temple Cures....	142-145
2. Ancient Reports on Incubation.....	145-158
3. Historical Evaluation of Temple Medicine..	158-173
4. Social and Political Implications of Divine Healing	173-180
IV. CULT	181-213
1. Ritual for the Healthy.....	182-184
2. Ritual for the Sick.....	184-190
3. Daily Temple Services.....	191-194

4. Festivals	195-199
5. Hymns and Sermons.....	199-208
6. Games	208-213
V. IMAGE	214-231
1. Location—Material—Artists	215-218
2. The Asclepius Ideal.....	218-225
3. Attributes	225-231
VI. TEMPLES	232-257
1. General Description.....	232-237
2. Affiliation	238-242
3. Early History	242-250
4. Hellenistic and Roman Times.....	251-255
5. The Christian Era.....	255-257
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	257-260
INDEX OF TESTIMONIES.....	261-270
INDEX OF NAMES.....	271-277

I. THE HERO ASCLEPIUS

The process by which the great deities of antiquity came into being is in most cases hidden from the eyes of the modern interpreter, and it is with conjectures alone that he can penetrate the mystery of their existence. For such gods as Zeus or Apollo assumed power long before the dawn of history, in ages from which no records have survived. Like aboriginal inhabitants of the divine abode they occupied their seats throughout the span of ancient civilization. With Asclepius it stands otherwise. As one of the immortals, as god of medicine, he was revered from the classical period to the end of antiquity. To earlier generations, however, he was known only as a hero who had lived on this earth. For Homer, for Hesiod, even for Pindar, Asclepius was a mortal. To be sure, most scholars nowadays contend that this hero is but one of the "decayed gods" or "gods in disguise," deities, that is, who lost the divine prerogatives which they once possessed, and appeared in the world of the Epic as human beings.¹ Even if this claim proved to be correct, it would still be true that the god Asclepius, who held sway over the mind and the imagination of the ancients, was considered a hero for centuries before his divine dignity was generally recognized. This fact cannot have been without significance for the history of the Asclepius worship, nor can it have been without influence on the formation of the concept of Asclepius' godhead. The career of the hero Asclepius must have constituted at least part of the matter that went into the making of the god. At any rate, there are innumerable testimonies dealing with the hero Asclepius, and testimonies that in point of age if not in value precede those which speak of the god. If justice is to be done to the data transmitted by tradition, the investigator must start with an interpretation of the heroic figure; it is impossible for him to turn his attention to Asclepius, the god, unless he has previously reached an opinion on Asclepius, the hero.

1. THE HOMERIC ASCLEPIUS

It is in the *Iliad* that the hero Asclepius is mentioned for the first time. Here he is represented as one of the aristocrats of old, as a king like Agamemnon or Menelaus, though of lesser might than is given to them.

¹ Cf. e. g. Pfister, *Bursian*, 1930, p. 128, and in general, below, p. 65.

Does this mean that the saga which Homer followed was that of a warrior, a chieftain of the Greeks? Is the tale of Asclepius and his sons the reflection of historical events, or is it the product of poetical fantasy? And assuming that the Asclepius myth is older than the Epic, in which region of Greece did it originate? Modern views are sharply divided on these fundamental issues, and it is difficult indeed to reach a decision in regard to them. For the Homeric Asclepius is a rather shadowy figure. Reference is made to him only as the father of Machaon and Podalirius who fought before Troy. He himself has no active share in the deeds that are recounted, nor is his personality portrayed in detail even where the mention of his name would have permitted a more elaborate description. It seems necessary, therefore, to consider carefully even such data as are furnished by the Homeric and post-Homeric tradition concerning Asclepius' children. In this way—despite the scantiness of the material—one may perhaps succeed in descrying Asclepius himself as he was seen in the beginning.

i. Asclepius' Heroic Rank

Asclepius, as Homer says in the *Catalogue of Ships* (T. 135), is the father of Machaon and Podalirius, leaders of men from Tricca, Ithome and Oechalia. In another passage, where Machaon alone is mentioned, the poet calls Asclepius the father of Machaon, who is in command of the soldiers from Trice (T. 164, *vv.* 201 f.). Unmistakably, then, the *Iliad* delineates Asclepius as a king whose sons and subjects participated in the common venture of the Greeks.²

The ancients did not hesitate to accept the Homeric claim as to Asclepius' rank and time of life. He was generally held to have belonged to that generation of great heroes who of yore had been the pride of the Greeks (T. 5; 127). There was dissension only concerning the question whether he had been a contemporary of the happenings described by Homer, or whether he had died too early to witness them. Some believed that Asclepius had passed away while Podalirius was only a young child (T. 184), that is, before the Trojan War. A few chroniclers consequently fixed the time of Asclepius' demise in the thirty-eighth year

² Cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 44: "... nach der Ilias ist Asklepios ... ein ... König"; Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, pp. 20 f.: "irdischer Herrscher"; W. Leaf, *The Iliad*, I², 1900, ad II, 729: "a mortal chieftain." Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 234 f., states that in the view of the Homeric poem Asclepius is a physician. Such a claim is untenable and warranted only by the fact that Farnell does not discuss at all the implications contained in Homer's characteristic of Machaon and Podalirius as princes. But cf. also below, n. 30. For the Homeric Asclepius in general, cf. Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, Ch. I.

after Heracles became King of Argos (T. 129).³ Others thought that he was still alive when the Greeks battled the Trojans (T. 92), and this assumption is the earlier one attested.⁴ That Asclepius lived in the Heroic Age no one ever questioned.

The modern historian will have little use for the ancients' attempts to determine with such exactness the year of the death of Asclepius. But on the basis of the Homeric testimony he, too, may be inclined to assume that the Asclepius legend, like other heroic sagas, reflects the memory of a warrior or a tribal chief.⁵ However, if he scrutinizes the evidence under this supposition he immediately encounters difficulties. For Homer's assertion that Asclepius was a king is strangely at variance with the few data otherwise furnished by the Epic in regard to this hero.

To begin with, the only characterization given of Asclepius bears on his medical knowledge rather than on his authority and dignity as a king. Twice Machaon is called the son of Asclepius, the blameless physician (T. 164, *v.* 194; T. 165, *v.* 518).⁶ It is true, other Homeric kings and heroes, too, know medicine and do not recoil from treating wounds. But none of them is ever designated as a physician.⁷ Such an epithet, in the world of the *Iliad*, is singular and very different indeed from those usually attached to an epic hero. It is hard to believe that it would have been given to one who really was the peer of princes.

Additional reasons for suspecting Asclepius' royal rank seem to be

³ Concerning this testimony = Apollodorus, *Fr.* 87 [Jacoby], cf. Jacoby's commentary, *F. Gr. H.*, II, p. 752, 22 ff. Contrary to his earlier opinion he now holds that it is not genuine. If the year here assumed for the fall of Troy were that accepted also by Apollodorus, Asclepius' death would fall in the year 1237 B. C.; if, on the other hand, one of the earlier datings of Troy's destruction is presupposed, Asclepius would have died even sooner. Cf. also below, pp. 91 f.

⁴ Sophocles proffers this opinion; cf. also below, pp. 41 f.

⁵ Such an interpretation of the heroic saga which prevailed for a long time is now beginning to be discredited; cf. e. g. Wilamowitz, *Die griechische Heldensage*, I, S. B. Berl., phil.-hist. Kl., 1925, pp. 58 ff. Still, it must be reckoned with as a possibility, and it has been applied also to the Asclepius myth; for such theories cf. Thraemer, Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v. Asklepios, I, 1, p. 622, 43 ff., and Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 44. Of course, for the moment I am disregarding the opinion of those who believe that Asclepius originally was a god.

⁶ T. 164 has been emended by Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 46, n. 3 (cf. also *Glaube*, II, p. 228, n. 2) to show Homer calling Machaon, not Asclepius, a blameless physician (*ἀμύμονα ἰητῆρα* instead of *ἀμύμονος ἰητῆρος*). I do not think that this change of the text is permissible; cf. also L. Weber, *Philologus*, LXXXVII, 1932, p. 389, n. 1 a. Even if Wilamowitz' emendation of T. 164 were accepted, T. 165 would still denote Asclepius as a physician. In passing I wish to stress that the epithet *ἀμύμων* which is here given to Asclepius is never attributed to any god in the Homeric Epic; cf. Panofka, *Asklepios und die Asklepiaden*, Berl. Phil.-Hist. Abh., 1845, p. 271, n. 2; cf. also T. 257a.

⁷ The one exception to this rule is found in connection with the sons of Asclepius (T. 135 f.). In regard to them, cf. below, pp. 5 ff. For the medical knowledge of the Homeric heroes in general, cf. e. g. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 45, n. 2.

provided by the only incident in the hero's life that is recounted by Homer. The poet notes that Machaon heals Menelaus with remedies which his father had once received from Chiron. The Centaur, being amicably disposed toward Asclepius, gave him some drugs which Asclepius in turn handed over to his son (T. 164, v. 219). The few words referring to Chiron's gift to Asclepius hardly suffice to prove that the two were placed on equal footing, as has sometimes been maintained.⁸ Such a conclusion might be warranted if an exchange of presents between Chiron and Asclepius were related. The statement as it stands seems to imply that Chiron was thought to be superior to Asclepius, be it in rank or knowledge. On the other hand, Homer's report does not authorize the claim that the Centaur was Asclepius' teacher. While the poet explicitly states that Achilles, the only other hero whose association with Chiron he attests, was educated by the sage and among other things was taught by him to prepare remedies, he says of Asclepius simply that Chiron presented him with certain drugs.⁹ Not until later on, when it became customary to suppose that every hero of some standing had been Chiron's pupil, was it thought that Asclepius, too, had been instructed by him in medicine as well as in the other arts. But in the *Iliad*, the connection between the two is not pictured in this conventional form of the heroic saga.¹⁰

What, then, is the significance of the Homeric story? Is it not perhaps indicative of the fact that in the legend taken up by Homer Asclepius was represented as a physician? Would Chiron have donated healing herbs to Asclepius, had he not trusted that Asclepius, being especially interested in medicine, would appreciate such a gift? Had he considered him primarily a warrior, Chiron could have presented him with a weapon, a token that he found appropriate for a hero like Peleus. Moreover, Asclepius apparently did value Chiron's gift higher than anything else and thought it most helpful. Otherwise he would hardly have passed it on to his son, when Machaon went to war. Peleus, when his son, Achilles, sailed against Troy, gave to him the sword which he had received from Chiron.¹¹ On such an occasion to choose the one gift

⁸ Cf., e. g., Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

⁹ Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 304-5, goes too far, therefore, in asserting that, according to Homer, Chiron was Asclepius' teacher; cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 391, n. 3. For Achilles and Chiron, cf. *Iliad*, XI, 832. Achilles (Peleus) and Machaon (Asclepius) are the only figures in Homer who are connected with Chiron, cf. Leaf, *op. cit.*, ad IV, 219.

¹⁰ Concerning the later interpretation of Chiron as the mentor of Asclepius, cf. below, p. 38.

¹¹ Concerning Chiron, Peleus and Achilles, cf. *Iliad*, XVI, 143; XIX, 390.

seems suitable for a physician, just as to choose the other is worthy of a prince. Finally, Chiron was not merely the friend and patron of heroes; he was also the inventor of herbal medicine whose descendants were known even to Hellenistic writers as experts in drugs which they had inherited from their father. He was considered the first physician and was worshipped in this capacity by the Magnesians.¹² Throughout antiquity Chiron enjoyed great and lasting fame on account of his medical accomplishments. To Pindar, he was the one who first comes to the poet's mind as a helper for his ailing friend (T. 1, *vv.* 1 ff.), and down to late Roman centuries Chiron was respected as the instigator of the medical art.¹³ Surely, it makes good sense that this medical hero should have presented Asclepius with drugs, and it is quite plausible that Asclepius, even if he was a physician rather than a king, should have been his friend.

But the assumption that Asclepius was a physician, a craftsman, seems to be contradicted by Homer's representation of his children. Are they not princes, aristocrats like all the other heroes? Unquestionably, this is the impression conveyed by the Epic. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the rôle played by Machaon and Podalirius in the *Iliad* reveals, I think, that the two are by no means the equals of their fellows-in-arms.

To begin the inquiry with Machaon, who in the *Iliad* is more clearly described than his brother Podalirius: Machaon is said to be in command of the soldiers from Trice (T. 164, *vv.* 202 f.). Yet, does he really act as becomes a leader of men, the son of a king? In the first instance (T. 164), in which Machaon is one of the principal figures of the story unfolded, Agamemnon, in deadly fear for his wounded brother, sends his herald to summon Machaon. The messenger quickly succeeds in finding him on the battle field among his troops, and delivers his message. Immediately the Asclepiad complies with his call. When they arrive at the place where Menelaus lies hurt, Machaon draws forth the arrow, loosens Menelaus' armor, and, having inspected the injury, sucks out the blood and spreads upon the wound the simples which he had received from his father.

Now it is not astonishing—as has been stated before—that a hero should be able to treat wounds. Achilles, Patroclus, and all the other

¹² For the Chironidae, cf. *F.H.G.*, II, p. 263 (Dicaearchus, *Fr.* 61); for the Magnesians, cf. Plutarch, *Conv.*, III, 1, 3 (647a) and below, p. 96.

¹³ As regards Chiron, cf. Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 3 ff.; W. A. Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, 1925, pp. 359-61. For Chiron in the Roman period, cf. *e.g.* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 196.

princes know how to do that.¹⁴ Nor would it be particularly strange that Agamemnon should be so anxious to have Machaon take care of his brother. Machaon may have had more experience in dealing with such cases, and the leader of all Greeks, the commander-in-chief, naturally must secure the services of the man who is most capable of doing the job. However, it is peculiar that Machaon apparently expects such calls. He does not express any astonishment at Agamemnon's summons; he is not too busy fighting to act in accordance with the king's wishes. Moreover, although he is on the field of battle in the midst of his soldiers, he has his simples with him; he does not rush to his tent to get them; he proceeds straightway to Menelaus and renders assistance. Is this not the behavior of a regular physician rather than of a warrior or a hero who if need arises may also dress wounds?

In the second scene in which Machaon is portrayed (T. 165), he is shown in actual fight and is said to be the foremost warrior. Nevertheless his exploits are not recited; that Paris' arrow puts a stop to them is all that the poet has to report.¹⁵ But he adds with meticulous care that the Greeks, who are battling by Machaon's side, are greatly disturbed by his being wounded, and Idomeneus asks Nestor to transport Machaon to the ships, for "a leech is of the worth of many other men" (v. 514). Not only is Machaon here called a physician—the demand to save him is motivated not by his excellence as a warrior but as a doctor. Nestor then takes Machaon back, not to Machaon's tent, but to his own (T. 166). Here Machaon is given wine, here a bath is prepared for him (T. 168), here Patroclus comes to inquire about his condition (T. 167). Why is Machaon not brought to his own people? When Eurypylus is wounded and asks for Patroclus' help he is conducted to his own tent, as is only natural.¹⁶ Does Machaon, the leader of the contingent from Trice, have no servants, no tent, and is he therefore left to Nestor's compassion?

In both scenes, then, in which Machaon appears he behaves like a physician. His actions are not those of a leader of men, nor is he esteemed by the others as a fighter. To be sure, the *Iliad* states that he is in command of the Tricaceans, he is mentioned as a participant in the battle that is raging, but his rank as a chieftain, his soldierly achievements remain mere accessories. I suggest, then, that the heroic character

¹⁴ Concerning Achilles and Patroclus, cf. *e. g.* *Iliad*, XI, 828 ff.

¹⁵ T. 165, vv. 505-6: . . . 'Αλέξανδρος . . . / παῦσεν ἀριστεύοντα Μαχάονα. Scholion T on these lines (T. 165a) also notes the discrepancy between Homer's use of the term ἀριστεία and the content of the verses. Cf. below, n. 53.

¹⁶ Cf. *Iliad*, XI, 828; 843.

of the Machaon figure is an invention of the epic poet. Machaon, the physician, was elevated to the dignity of a hero in order to be acceptable to the circle of heroes in which he was supposed to move. On one occasion he has to play a prominent part in the *Iliad*: he heals the king, Menelaus, and his treatment is described in great detail. Only a hero can perform so important a task, can act so conspicuously on the epic stage.¹⁷ Therefore the physician Machaon must be endowed with the qualities of a prince; he must have men to command. Yet all this heroic attire is nothing but artistic ornament.¹⁸

It is true, the post-Homeric saga seems to take Machaon, the hero, more seriously than did the *Iliad*. Leaving aside those feats which he accomplishes together with his brother,¹⁹ he is now represented as a fierce fighter: he dies as a soldier, be it through Penthesilea (T. 179), or through Eurypylos (T. 180 ff.), or upon entering Troy (T. 177; 178). Yet it must be stressed that even in the later Epic the actual description of Machaon's deeds is meager and indistinct. Although his very name is supposed to indicate his warlike disposition (T. 139), Eurypylos, the slayer of Machaon, is full of disdain for his opponent, who, he says, hoped to escape his doom through his knowledge of "sooth-

¹⁷ For Machaon's rôle, cf. also below, p. 16. The aristocratic bias of the epic poet hardly needs to be elaborated. But it is interesting in this connection to compare *Iliad*, XIV, 110 ff. In these verses the Greeks are represented as being in difficulties; good advice is sought. Diomedes thinks that he can offer it, and since he is afraid that the leaders will not listen to him on account of his youth, he begins his speech with a long diatribe on his noble descent. High birth legitimates the epic figure and its actions. Physicians, in the Homeric world, are of inferior standing. With the exception of Machaon and Podalirius they have not even individual names, cf. *Iliad*, XIII, 213; XVI, 28. In the *Odyssey*, XVII, 383-4, they are classed together with other craftsmen.

¹⁸ Such "heroizations" are not uncommon in the Epic. It is now generally recognized that the heroic saga, as it is transmitted by Homer, may be the vehicle of stories of quite a different character, cf. e.g. Wilamowitz, *S.B.Berl.*, 1925, pp. 59 f.; O. Weinreich in L. Friedlaender, *Sittengeschichte Roms*⁹⁻¹⁰, ed. G. Wissowa, IV, 1921, pp. 101 ff. In the case of Diomedes, on the other hand, one can still observe how the dignity of a king is bestowed upon a figure in accordance with the poet's designs. In *Iliad*, XIV, 110 ff., Diomedes is characterized as the son of a wealthy aristocrat. In another passage, *Iliad*, XXIII, 471, he is named a prince; while in *Iliad*, II, 559 ff., he is described as almost the mightiest among the Argive kings, cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae*, 1933, p. 259. One might be tempted to assume that the "King" Machaon, who at the same time is a great healer, is one of those ancient kings who are sometimes likened to the "medicine-man." Cf. e.g. G. Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*³, 1924, pp. 135 ff.; *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, 1912, p. 39. Yet, apart from the fact that it seems impossible to trace Asclepius or his children to Mycenaean times—Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*, *Sather Classical Lectures*, VIII, 1932, at any rate has not attempted to do so—the concept of divine kingship, if applicable at all to the interpretation of Greek history, in the Homeric Epic has receded into the background; cf. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae*, pp. 223; 220. Medicine, in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, is considered to be rational knowledge. Cf. in general Ch. Daremberg, *La Médecine dans Homère*, 1865.

¹⁹ Cf. below, pp. 13 f.

ing salves" (T. 181), and the Greeks mourn the death of Machaon, a mighty warrior, as he is called (T. 180, *v.* 406), because he knew "skillful arts" (T. 183, *v.* 15).²⁰ Moreover, Machaon's share in medical achievements is increased along with his soldierly deeds. He is named as the one who restored the health of Philoctetes (T. 173 ff.).²¹ Finally, when Machaon's life previous to the war is set forth, it is again his medical knowledge that is celebrated. After the early death of their father, Machaon educated Podalirius and taught him the art of healing (T. 184).²² There is hardly any doubt that even in the post-Homeric tradition, just as in the Homeric Epic, Machaon is a physician dressed in the trappings of a hero.

The same holds good of Podalirius. In the *Iliad* this son of Asclepius remains a mere name; Homer is satisfied with taking note of his existence.²³ Like his brother Machaon, he calls him a physician (T. 135 f.), he implies that Podalirius and Machaon are regular army physicians (T. 136).²⁴ These few data intimate at least that the Homeric Podalirius is hardly a genuine hero.

In the *post-Homerica*, where Podalirius assumes an individual character and is given a more active rôle, the fact that he is a doctor is unmistakable. Leaving aside again the deeds accomplished by the two brothers together, it is Podalirius who treats Ajax (T. 141 f.) and Philoctetes (T. 201);²⁵ in addition, he heals Epeius and Acamas, who were injured in the games held in honor of Achilles (T. 199), and he also cures Thoas and Eurypylus (T. 200). Like Machaon, Podalirius, too, had received salves from his father with which to assist the wounded

²⁰ Quintus Smyrnaeus gives the story in detail. He believes that Machaon was killed by Eurypylus—the version of the *Ilias Parva* (T. 186), in which Machaon heals Philoctetes (T. 173). It is probable, therefore, that Quintus' report reflects the tradition of the Cyclic Epic, even if he did not directly copy from this source, as is generally believed, cf. W. Schmid-O. Stählin, *Geschichte d. griech. Literatur*, I, 1, 1929, p. 198, n. 5, and below, n. 72. For Machaon in Quintus' poem, cf. also Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Machaon, XIV, p. 146, 20.

²¹ For the rôle which this treatment plays in the Epic, cf. also below, p. 13.

²² This, too, is attested by Quintus, cf. above, n. 20.

²³ For the difference in importance which the two brothers have in the *Iliad*, cf. also below, pp. 11 ff.

²⁴ For a detailed interpretation of T. 136, cf. below, p. 11.

²⁵ The exploits of Machaon and Podalirius are discussed below, pp. 13 f. Incidentally, the same cases are ascribed both to Machaon and to Podalirius respectively. It is impossible to inquire here into all the variants of the late saga concerning Asclepius' children. It may suffice to say that the divergences in regard to their medical achievements are due in part to the differences in dating the death of Machaon. If it was assumed that he was killed by Penthesilea (T. 179), he could not act in those healings which occurred after the death of Achilles; if he was thought to have died through Eurypylus (T. 180), or during the conquest of Troy (T. 177), Machaon lived long enough to treat Ajax and Philoctetes.

(T. 199).²⁶ Certainly, Podalirius is also pictured as a fighter. He is named among those who man the Trojan horse (T. 204).²⁷ Still, where he is shown in action, his unheroic character becomes evident. He is able to contend in combat, but he has a special reason for doing so: while busy tending the wounded near the ships, he learns of Machaon's death. Enraged at the murder of his brother he clothes himself in his armor and rushes forth to the battlefield where he kills many a man (T. 182). Were it not in order to take revenge, he would heal men instead of killing them.²⁸

Behind the array of the Epic, then, it can still be recognized, I think, that Machaon and Podalirius are physicians rather than warriors, craftsmen rather than kings. The Epic, to be sure, makes them appear in the garb of heroes. Yet it is only for the purposes of the Epic that the heroic mask is superimposed upon the physicians Machaon and Podalirius; for otherwise they would not be suitable companions of the noblemen in whose society they are to live and act.²⁹ As the princely character of the Asclepiads vanishes, not much remains of Asclepius, the king. Homer's representation of Asclepius' children creates the impression that their father, too, should be considered a leader of men. But this is the result of poetical fiction. It does not contradict the other data related by Homer concerning Asclepius himself: he may well have been a physician.³⁰

²⁶ This testimony derives from Quintus; cf. above, n. 20. That here the drugs are a magic cure-all (T. 199)—for this detail, cf. also below, p. 43—and that Asclepius' name is invoked during the treatment (T. 201), are certainly late inventions; for another healing of Podalirius, cf. below, p. 19. It is interesting that the story of Podalirius assumes features earlier attested for that of Machaon. Compare how later Podalirius, to whom the death of his brother is almost unbearable (T. 184), is consoled by Nestor (T. 185), apparently a reminiscence of Machaon's relation to Nestor, as it is described in the *Iliad* (T. 165 ff.).

²⁷ This testimony has been overlooked by Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 48, who states that Podalirius is never mentioned in connection with the fall of Troy.

²⁸ Note that the discussion of his actual exploits in battle (T. 203) is very vague, indeed even more indistinct than in the case of Machaon (cf. above, pp. 6 ff.); the better part of this testimony contains the description of a cave! It seems symbolic that in the opinion of the ancients Podalirius' name indicated that he was more peaceful than Machaon (T. 197; cf. 139). The saga of his return from Troy is in keeping with this character, cf. below, p. 19.

²⁹ As far as I am aware, Türk in Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Podalirius, III, 2, p. 2587, 16 ff., is the only one to have proposed a similar thesis. He too holds that Machaon and Podalirius originally were physicians and were ranged among the heroes only by the Epic. But his claim is based solely on the fact that the two, although called physicians, are depicted as warriors and leaders of men. He has failed to notice, as have all those who considered Asclepius a king, the inconsistency throughout the epic description of the Asclepiads. The complicated history of the Podalirius figure can be fully evaluated only in section ii, below.

³⁰ For the originally unheroic character of certain heroic figures, cf. above, n. 18.

As a matter of fact, such a contention is also in accord with the ancients' esteem of the Homeric Asclepius. While everybody accepted the claim of the Epic that he was the father of Machaon and Podalirius, the leaders of men from Tricca, Oechalia and Ithome, no one actually had anything to tell about the king or chieftain Asclepius, his reign and deeds. Describing his character and his accomplishments, they spoke of the physician alone.³¹ That simple medical knowledge was ascribed to him with which his time was generally credited, that is, medicine as it was cultivated before the rise of scientific studies (T. 125; cf. 145). Or he was said to have brought about a slight improvement in the art of his day (T. 354). Plato, projecting his own designs into the past, dared to see in Asclepius the physician who had realized the ideal of political medicine as conceived by the philosopher (T. 124).³² If Asclepius had really been a king, if as a king he had had an existence outside the poetical realm of the Epic, it would be strange indeed that his memory left no trace in ancient tradition.³³

ii. Machaon and Podalirius

As Homer tells the story of Asclepius and his sons, it seems to deal with real or historical characters. Even after it has been recognized that Asclepius was not a chieftain and therefore cannot be considered a tribal hero in the strict sense of the word, one might still maintain that he actually existed. If the memory of great warriors could be preserved by posterity, the memory of great physicians could be retained as well.³⁴ Asclepius, Machaon and Podalirius, then, one might suggest, were human beings who once lived on this earth; their story is transformed by Homer only in so far as he has elevated them to the dignity of princes. Yet, it is hardly probable that this is so. Granted that Asclepius,

Fundamentally, then, I agree with Farnell, who claims without giving any reasons for his assumption that Asclepius, according to Homer and the saga which he followed, was a physician, cf. above, n. 2.

³¹ Concerning Asclepius' participation in the Voyage of the Argonauts and in the Calydonian Hunt, usually called his heroic deeds, cf. below, pp. 38 f.

³² For the interpretation of this and other statements concerning Asclepius' "political medicine," cf. below, pp. 178 ff.

³³ Of course, no strictly historical sources were extant in regard to any of the epic heroes; yet there were certain sectional traditions by which the Homeric picture usually was supplemented, or information was gathered from the Cyclic Epic. With regard to Asclepius, the king, these sources seem to have yielded nothing, in spite of the fact that the Asclepiads were favorites of the post-Homeric saga; cf. also below, n. 44.

³⁴ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 236 ff., has strongly insisted on this possibility; for earlier proponents of such a theory, cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 1, p. 621, 52 ff.

Machaon and Podalirius were historical figures—Asclepius, as father of Machaon and Podalirius, seems to be a fictitious character. For he was not always known in this capacity, not even to Homer. The references to Podalirius are obviously later additions which were made in accordance with the post-Homeric saga as it was codified in the Cyclic Epic.³⁵

Podalirius in the *Iliad* is mentioned only twice, in both cases in connection with Machaon. The first statement is to the effect that neither Machaon nor Podalirius can be called upon to help the wounded Eurypylus because Machaon is wounded himself, while Podalirius is engaged in battle (T. 136). The other information furnished concerns the names of the cities over which the two brothers were ruling, and the number of ships commanded jointly by Podalirius and Machaon is added (T. 135). Now as for the first of these passages, it is strange indeed. For it presupposes that Machaon and Podalirius usually take care of the wounded and that it is extraordinary that Eurypylus should appeal to Patroclus for help. But though it is true that in some books regular army physicians are referred to, in others the heroes themselves are wont to treat their wounds and those of their comrades.³⁶ Thus Nestor, whom Patroclus has just left when he meets Eurypylus, has taken charge of Machaon, and nobody has thought of calling in Podalirius or any other physician. The explanation given by Eurypylus therefore reads like an addition made by someone who knew that regular physicians were attached to the Greek army and that Machaon and Podalirius were famed for their medical skill. The words in question can hardly be original in their place.³⁷ Considering the fact that the only other mention of Podalirius (T. 135) is found in the *Catalogue of Ships*, which represents a tradition in many respects at variance with that of the *Iliad*, it seems safe to conclude that Podalirius' name in the beginning did not occur in this poem.³⁸

³⁵ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 45 ff., esp. p. 51. In my interpretation I follow Wilamowitz for whose conclusions I shall propose some additional arguments. Moreover, the question why Podalirius was included in the *Iliad* has not yet been satisfactorily solved, cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 390, n. 2.

³⁶ Cf. above, pp. 3; 5.

³⁷ Note that Ennius (T. 146) in his description of the scene under discussion makes Eurypylus ask for Patroclus' assistance, because "the wounded crowd the entrance ways of the sons of Asclepius; there is no access." Here the fiction that Machaon and Podalirius are fighters is discarded entirely. Ennius' source is supposed to be Aeschylus or Homer, cf. M. Schanz-C. Hosius, *Geschichte d. römischen Literatur* I⁴, 1927, p. 89.

³⁸ This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the difficult question of the composition of the Homeric Epic. That the text of the *Iliad* shows traces of interpolation even the "unitarians" admit, cf. e. g. H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Litera-*

This inference, based on literary criteria alone, can be corroborated by an evaluation of the medical knowledge ascribed to Machaon and Podalirius respectively in the post-Homeric saga. Here, medicine is divided between the two physicians in such a way that the one is the representative of surgery, that is, of the treatment of wounds, while the other is in charge of the cure of internal diseases. Arctinus, who mentions this partition which he regards as ordained by Poseidon, also attests that it was Podalirius who through his great skill was able to diagnose the illness of Ajax (T. 141 f.).³⁹ Arctinus' statement in revealing the specific task of Podalirius makes it possible to surmise why another physician was needed in the later saga. While in the *Iliad* only wounds and their treatment are depicted,⁴⁰ diseases like that of Ajax and Philoctetes are described in the post-Homeric Epic, in fact, they are of great conse-

ture², 1942, p. 46. That the *Catalogue of Ships* deviates from the main text even T. W. Allen, *The Homeric Catalogue of Ships*, 1921, pp. 168 f., concedes. It is quite a different problem whether the books in which Machaon and Podalirius appear belong to the older or to the younger layer of the *Iliad*. Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, pp. 45 ff.; *Die Ilias und Homer*², 1920, p. 200) is of the opinion that *Iliad*, IV and XI, from which the testimonies concerning Machaon and Podalirius are taken, are relatively late songs; in this assumption he is in agreement with Leaf in his introduction to Books IV and XI and *Prolegomena*, XXII-XXIII. For the late date of the *Catalogue of Ships* from which the third reference to the Asclepiads stems, cf. below, n. 78. In spite of the more recent pleas for the "unity of Homer" (cf. e.g. J. A. Scott, *Sather Classical Lectures*, I, 1921), it seems still permissible to believe that not all the books of the *Iliad* or all their parts were written at the same time; the extreme unitarian view is as unconvincing as the extreme separatist position. On these questions cf. Nilsson's discriminating survey, *Homer and Mycenae*, pp. 1 ff. The Machaon and Podalirius episodes are of too little consequence to allow a decision concerning the date of the books under discussion, nor is this essential for my interpretation. One can say only this: the fact that Machaon and Podalirius are represented as physicians argues for a later rather than for an earlier date; for treatment of wounds by physicians is a sign of later specialization of knowledge, whereas treatment by the warriors themselves is characteristic of more primitive conditions. Of course, the unitarians claim that such variations are not mutually exclusive and that the poet's picture of life is no more varied than was life itself; cf. e.g. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 ff. At least in this instance I think it is safer to side with those who interpret the divergencies to be observed as distinct changes of customs which betray the reworking of the Epic by succeeding generations, cf. e.g. Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, pp. 146 ff. It is not likely that, except in emergencies, anybody took the risk of meddling with wounds when regular physicians were attached to the army.

³⁹ T. 141, according to tradition, is ascribed to Arctinus and his poem, the *Iliupersis*. Some scholars, however, attribute it to the *Aethiopis*, a change that is hardly permissible, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 47 f.; E. Bethe, *Homer*, II, 1922, p. 179. In this connection, the important fact is that the testimony goes back to the Cyclic Epic, whatever the name of the poem and whoever its author; for these complicated problems, cf. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 212; Bethe, *op. cit.*, pp. 207 ff. For the relation of the Asclepiads to Poseidon, cf. also below, p. 15.

⁴⁰ The pestilence sent by Apollo, *Iliad*, I, 43 ff., is the only exception. The ancients already noticed that references to the treatment of diseases by diet were missing in the *Iliad* (T. 140 ff.), and consequently discussed the question whether dietetics, that is internal medicine, had existed in Homer's time, or whether it had been invented only afterwards.

quence for its plot: Ajax' madness forms the climax of the Ajax drama; the healing of Philoctetes is decisive for the outcome of the Trojan War.⁴¹ Such cases, however, complicated as they were, could hardly be taken care of by Machaon, a surgeon whose routine concerned the tending of injuries.⁴² In the more sophisticated times of the Cyclic Epic they seemed to require a specialist's knowledge, and such a specialist was found in Podalirius, who is always referred to as healer of internal diseases.⁴³

But why should Podalirius' name have been interpolated in the *Iliad* if he was a figure of the late saga and if his presence in the Homeric Epic was not essential to the actions there described? It seems that through the later poems on the Trojan War Podalirius had become so closely associated with Machaon that the one could not be thought of without the other. The Cyclic Epic was wont to represent the two together and to give them a common share, and not an unimportant one, in the events in which they were involved.⁴⁴ Thus Machaon and Podalirius, now pupils of Chiron like their father (T. 56; 148), are named among the wooers of Helen (T. 150). When the Greeks sail against Troy they invite the two heroes whom they respect as good doctors (T. 151) to join the army,⁴⁵ and their confidence in Machaon and Podalirius is fully justified by the subsequent behavior of the two Asclepiads. Both prove capable of fighting fiercely (T. 178). In the games held in honor of Patroclus they win the fourth prize after Agamemnon, Nestor and Ajax (T. 155). In their medical function they excel in the healing of Telephus (T. 153-4) and Philoctetes (T. 152 a-b).⁴⁶ The sick flock to their tent, and so busy are they with tending

⁴¹ For Ajax in the post-Homeric saga and particularly for Arctinus' representation, cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v. Aias, I, 1, pp. 126 ff. For Philoctetes, cf. *e.g.* T. 282, 10.

⁴² Homer does not call Machaon a surgeon but a physician. Yet he defines the physician's task thus: "to cut out arrows and to spread soothing simples" (T. 165, v. 515). This verse was considered a later addition by some ancient critics, because it restricts the realm of medicine to one of its provinces and thus degrades the value and dignity of the art. Modern commentators usually follow suit; cf. G. M. Bolling, *The Athetized Lines of the Iliad*, 1944, p. 127. But Leaf, *ad loc.*, rightly insists that this argumentation is not convincing and that the words in question are genuine because the line "fairly represents the primitive stage of Homeric medicine"; cf. also above, n. 40.

⁴³ Cf. T. 140-142. The late variants concerning Machaon as the healer of diseases or Podalirius as the healer of wounds should not obscure the original character of Podalirius as a specialist for internal illnesses, cf. also Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 524.

⁴⁴ Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 56, rightly says that the Asclepiads play a subordinate rôle in the Homeric Epic. The situation changes considerably in the later saga.

⁴⁵ Concerning the ships of which the Asclepiads were in command and later variants in regard to their number, cf. T. 137; 137a ff.

⁴⁶ Here and in the following characterization of Machaon and Podalirius I have made

the wounded that many a warrior must seek assistance from his comrades in order to receive quick relief (T. 146); their value to the Greek cause is such that in appreciation of their merits exemption from war services and taxes is granted to them later on (T. 147).⁴⁷ Podalirius and Machaon, then, are constantly mentioned together, Machaon, the "brave, great, sure, wise, patient, compassionate" (T. 149), a "man of great beauty" (T. 180a), and Podalirius, the "stout, strong, haughty, and stern" (T. 149).⁴⁸ Under these circumstances, is it astonishing that Podalirius made his way from the post-Homeric saga into the *Iliad*, that his name was inserted into the older poem? That such changes in favor of Podalirius were actually made in the Homeric text is certain. For in that edition of the *Iliad* which Plato read, Podalirius was named even as the healer of Menelaus along with Machaon (T. 143).⁴⁹ Like the Dioscuri, with whom they were compared in late centuries (T. 282, 24), the two, it seems, could not exist separately.

use also of testimonies taken from Dictys (fourth century A.D.) and Dares (fifth century A.D.), e.g. T. 153 ff.; 149. The Greek original which these late authors translated into Latin in part undoubtedly depended on good sources. As for Dictys, T. W. Allen, *The Journal of Philology*, LXII, 1910, pp. 207 ff., especially p. 223, has tried to show that in those incidents which do not occur in the *Iliad*, his exemplar copied from the Cyclic Epic. Even if this cannot be proved conclusively in regard to every detail, it must be admitted that Dictys' statements need not be mere inventions, but sometimes do reproduce old material, cf. Wilamowitz, *S.B. Berl.*, 1925, p. 47. Concerning Dares, cf. O. Rossbach, Pauly-Wissowa, IV, p. 2212, s.v., and N. E. Griffin, *Dares and Dictys*, Diss. Baltimore, 1907, p. 13, n. 2. At any rate, it seems permissible to quote a few items from Dares and Dictys in order to round out the picture of the Asclepiads as it was presented in the late Epic.

⁴⁷ The medical knowledge ascribed to the Asclepiads is outlined in T. 143 ff., 123 ff. In T. 145 it is said to have been as great as could be expected in their time. At any rate, it exceeded that of their fellow-comrades, as is shown by the passages just referred to. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 45, n. 2, claims that the Asclepiads did not know more than Patroclus; but this is certainly not true as far as the post-Homeric saga is concerned, and it seems questionable whether such a conclusion can be drawn even from the *Iliad*; cf. below, p. 16.

⁴⁸ The connection between the two heroes is limited to the time before the fall of Troy. No author, except Aristides (T. 282, 11), speaks of their common return. Generally it is supposed that Machaon died in the war, and Aristides admits that he is thinking of Machaon and Podalirius as if they were one (T. 282, 13; cf. also *ibid.*, 1-2). It is possible that this version represents the Coan tradition, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 49, but in that case it would be much later than the saga of the Cyclic Epic; cf. below, n. 52. That the divergencies concerning the various deeds of the heroes are due to the diverse assumptions concerning Machaon's death has been stated above, n. 25.

⁴⁹ There is no reason to assume with A. Ludwig, *Die Homervulgata*, 1898, p. 135, that Plato should have composed the line himself, nor is it satisfactory to say with the commentators on Plato that he is loosely quoting. That in the fourth century B.C. texts of Homer were current which were different from that to be found in the preserved manuscripts is a well established fact; cf. in general Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, pp. 282 ff., and concerning Plato in particular, *ibid.*, pp. 293 ff. Note moreover that Plato claims (T. 143) that the Asclepiads took care of Eurypylus, while according to *Iliad*, XI, 842 ff., it was Patroclus who healed him.

At any rate, originally Podalirius was not mentioned in the *Iliad*.⁵⁰ Is it possible to assume that Homer simply had no occasion to refer to both sons of Asclepius, while Podalirius was remembered by the later epic poets as soon as his special knowledge was needed? Was Asclepius from the beginning known as the father of the two Asclepiads in spite of the fact that in the *Iliad* at first Machaon alone was referred to as his son? Such a thesis, improbable in itself, is refuted also by another testimony. Arctinus, who is the first to differentiate between the specific tasks assigned to Machaon and Podalirius respectively, is of the opinion that they were the sons of Poseidon (T. 141-142).⁵¹ There is no way of telling whether this claim is original with Arctinus, or whether it goes back to older sources and was more widely accepted. This much, however, follows with necessity from Arctinus' statement: the post-Homeric saga was still undecided as to the genealogy of the two physicians. Homer's version of the descent of Machaon and Podalirius was only one of two, if not of many possibilities. Certainly, this circumstance is not in favor of the assumption that Homer's claim concerning the Asclepiadic origin of Machaon—to say nothing about that of Podalirius—represents a genuine historical tradition. One cannot escape the conclusion that the two physicians were associated with Asclepius only in an artificial way.⁵²

But why and by whom was their connection with Asclepius established? This question one must try to answer first in regard to Machaon, and for this purpose the moment of Machaon's main action, the occasion on which

⁵⁰ Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1658, 30 ff., suggests that Podalirius' name was inserted first in the *Catalogue of Ships* (T. 135) and that subsequently a reference to Podalirius was included in the other book (T. 136). This is not impossible since the *Catalogue* contains other names which do not occur elsewhere in the *Iliad*, cf. Thraemer, *ibid.*, and below, n. 78.

⁵¹ The testimony in question is much debated. Concerning its attribution to the *Iliupersis* or the *Aethiopis*, cf. above, n. 39. The text of line 1, where Poseidon is named (T. 141), is corrupt, but the name itself ('Εννοσίγαιος) is assured and an emendation is not permissible; cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 47-8, where he refutes Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 47; cf. also Bethe, *op. cit.*, p. 179. Th. Lefort, *Musée Belge*, IX, 1905, pp. 215 ff., has only shown that the line in question is metrically incorrect; but this fact does not justify a rejection of the authenticity of the genealogy therein proposed (contrary to Thraemer, *E. R. E.*, VI, p. 546a). That Poseidon is said to have been the father of Machaon and Podalirius follows also from Eustathius' paraphrase of the Arctinus verses (T. 142). Eustathius does not quote lines 1-2 because he is interested only in the task given to the heroes by Poseidon (lines 3 ff.), but in paraphrasing them he says expressly that Machaon and Podalirius were the children of Poseidon. For Poseidon's relation to medicine, cf. below, n. 57.

⁵² Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 51, claimed that Machaon and Podalirius, the representatives of Cos in the Epic, were introduced as sons of Asclepius because in the old Coan saga they appeared as his children. This suggestion he had to retract later, when the Coan Asclepius was found to be of relatively late date, cf. *Glaube*, II, pp. 228-9, and below, p. 243. There is no tradition older than that of the Epic on the basis of which the two could be proved to be Asclepiads.

he proves his real prowess assumes particular significance (T. 164):⁵³ Menelaus is wounded in the fighting that takes place after Achilles in his wrath has retired from the battle. However, Achilles, and, through him, Patroclus are the two heroes among the Greeks who are best versed in the preparation of especially efficacious simples. Chiron had taught Achilles this art.⁵⁴ Now Agamemnon could not possibly ask either Achilles or Patroclus to help his brother. On the other hand, the dangerous injury of the king, the concern of all, requires an outstanding physician. Here, Machaon is introduced into the fable. He is not one of the nobles; he is a craftsman, who, since he must appear on the Homeric stage in the costume of a hero, is dubbed a knight and invested with a train of vassals. Naturally, he needs a pedigree, too. Therefore, he is made the son of Asclepius, an excellent choice indeed. For Asclepius was the friend of Chiron and gave to his son a share in the benefit of the Centaur's gifts. Thus Machaon becomes a worthy competitor of Achilles whose place he is supposed to take, so that in spite of Achilles' wrath, the wound of Menelaus can be treated properly.⁵⁵

Such an hypothesis has at least some probability and is consistent with the results drawn from the analysis of Homer's representation of Asclepius. It merely presupposes that in Homeric times Asclepius was renowned as a great physician whose name was apt to add to the glory of those who could trace their descent to him. This much may safely be assumed. For Homer certainly did not invent Asclepius' relation to Chiron, a feature not even quite in line with the rôle ascribed to Asclepius in the *Iliad*. There must have been a legend of Asclepius, the physician, before the time of the Homeric Epic.⁵⁶

Later on, when Podalirius was introduced because a specialist for internal diseases was needed, he was pictured as the brother of Machaon, the famous physician of the *Iliad*. At the same time the two were made children of Poseidon, because this origin gave more dignity to their achievements, and medicine now was held in higher esteem.⁵⁷ But

⁵³ The poet speaks of Machaon's *ἀπιστεία* when he mentions his war deeds (T. 165); cf. above, p. 6. But actually Machaon shows himself the best and is most useful in his treatment of Menelaus, not in his military achievements which are never detailed and are irreconcilable with the true character of this hero.

⁵⁴ Cf. above, p. 4.

⁵⁵ For the parallelism in the representation of Machaon and Achilles, cf. above, p. 4.

⁵⁶ This fact, though of great importance for the appreciation of the Asclepius figure, as far as I can see, has never been explicitly stated in the modern discussion. Yet, it is tacitly presupposed by all who believe with Farnell that Homer affiliated Machaon and Podalirius with Asclepius "merely perhaps because of their medical character" (*Hero Cults*, p. 237). Otherwise it would be inexplicable why Asclepius should have been made the father of Machaon and Podalirius.

⁵⁷ This has been intimated already by Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 51. Poseidon in Greek

Podalirius was also drawn into the story of the *Iliad*, and once Homer's authority had superseded all other epic versions, Asclepius' relation to Machaon and Podalirius became predominant to the exclusion of all others. Gradually the two Asclepiads were made the helpers of Asclepius, the administrators of their father's might.⁵⁸ Yet, it should be remembered that they had not always been his sons, that in the oldest saga which can still be detected Asclepius was not the father of Machaon and Podalirius.

iii. Origin of the Asclepiads and of Asclepius

The last question that arises in connection with Homer's representation of Asclepius is that concerning the regional origin of the saga, as it was known to the poet. The *Iliad* does not state where Asclepius lived, just as it is silent about his forebears.⁵⁹ But from the data given in regard to Machaon and Podalirius it should be easy to infer which was the country of the Asclepiads and consequently that of their father. Even if one holds that their heroic attire is wholly fictitious, that Machaon and Podalirius were only the "adopted children" of Asclepius, one must suppose that the poet made them reside in that region of Greece where their father was believed to have lived.

For the ancients themselves, however, any attempt to derive Homer's opinion concerning Asclepius' homeland from his statements in regard to Machaon and Podalirius led into difficulties. Once Machaon is said to have come from Trice (T. 164, v. 202); another time Machaon and Podalirius are reported to be in charge of the troops from Tricca, Ithome and Oechalia (T. 135). In historical times Tricca was a famous town in Thessaly, while Ithome and Oechalia were well known cities in Messenia.⁶⁰ But obviously the poet did not believe that Asclepius ruled over these two regions or that his sons came from places so far apart. It was necessary, therefore, to assume that Homeric geography and later geography were at variance and to reinterpret historical reality in the light of the myth.⁶¹

mythology is sometimes associated with medicine. Not only is he himself called *īarpós* (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 215)—Chiron, the inventor of medicine, is also named as son of Poseidon, *Scholia in Homerum* [Nicole], IV, 219.

⁵⁸ Concerning the late concept of the Asclepiads, cf. Aristides (T. 282), and below, p. 78.

⁵⁹ Of course, Homer may well have been familiar with more facts than he cared to tell; Asclepius is not one of his principal characters but sketched only in a superficial way, cf. above, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 228: "Den Homererklärern ist es nicht gelungen, die Städte Ithome und Oichalia nachzuweisen [sc., in Thessaly], die der Schiffskatalog mit Triikka verbindet; es gab sie dagegen in Messenien (Triikka aber nicht) . . ." Cf. also Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, pp. 26 ff.

⁶¹ Kjellberg, *loc. cit.*, thinks that the general context in which T. 135 is to be found

The Messenians accomplished this task in a very simple way. Ithome and Oechalia were theirs. Tricca, which did not exist in Messenia, they believed to have disappeared in post-Homeric centuries, and as proof of this assertion they called a desolate spot in their country by this name (T. 38). Such a theory was advanced at least as early as the fourth century B. C. Ingenious as it may be, it is certainly far from being convincing.⁶²

On the other hand, the reasoning of those, who tried to make Homer's account consistent by placing all three towns in Thessaly, though somewhat subtler, was fundamentally not sounder. Apollodorus denied that there had been such a town as Oechalia in Messenia in Homer's time; he contended that in those days only Thessaly had had a city by that name.⁶³ Ithome was identified with old Thessalian Thome, which in turn had become part of Metropolis through joint settlement; for *Ithome*, the Thes-salians held, was an incorrect pronunciation of *Thome*.⁶⁴ Tricca, moreover, the surest warrant of the Thessalian claim, was declared to be the birth-place of Asclepius. Strabo attests this fact (T. 11), and so does Hyginus (T. 12). Since Strabo's authority for his statement is Apollodorus' book *On the Homeric Catalogue of Ships* and Hyginus' remark is taken from the Aristotelian *Peplos*, a treatise also dealing with the Homeric Epic, the Thessalian theory like the Messenian can be traced at least to the end of the fourth century B. C.⁶⁵

No final agreement was ever reached among the ancients concerning Homer's opinion. The Messenian, like the Thessalian, interpretation encountered considerable obstacles. Any decision in favor of one or the other was due solely to the bias of the respective critics.⁶⁶ For the

indicates that the poet of the *Catalogue* placed the cities of the Asclepiads in Thessaly. Even if this were correct, the ancients at any rate paid no regard to this contention of the poet.

⁶² It seems safe to ascribe this Messenian argumentation to the fourth century B. C., since the Messenian claims to Asclepius were brought forward immediately after the restoration of Messenia in 369 B. C., cf. below, p. 68. But the Messenian saga itself is much older; cf. below, pp. 32 f.

⁶³ Cf. Strabo, VIII, 3, 6; IX, 5, 17, and in general, F. Bölte, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Oichalia, XVII, pp. 2097 ff.

⁶⁴ Cf. Strabo, *loc. cit.*, and in general, Stählin, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Ithome, IX, p. 2307.

⁶⁵ For Apollodorus as Strabo's authority, cf. B. Niese, *Rh. M.*, XXXII, 1877, pp. 267 ff.; E. Schwartz, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Apollodorus, I, p. 2866; for Aristotle as the source of Hyginus, cf. A. Wendling, *De Peplo Aristotelico*, Diss. Bonn, 1901, pp. 35 ff. Why Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 243 a, says that Strabo gives the genuine tradition of Tricca, I cannot tell. The Thessalian origin of Asclepius apparently was accepted in the scholarly literature. This fact was first recognized by Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, p. 31.

⁶⁶ Kjellberg, *loc. cit.*, again was the first to insist that the Triccaean or Thessalian claim can hardly be called "the best" or "the oldest" one (contrary to the almost unanimous assumption of earlier scholars). This is true, at least as long as the argument

modern scholar, there seems to be a slight balance in favor of Tricca as Asclepius' or rather Machaon's home; for this particular town, though in a metrically different form, is attested by the earlier authority (T. 164, v. 202), where it occurs in connection with the "older" son of Asclepius.⁶⁷ And since this place is characterized as "the pastureland of horses," an epithet well fitting Thessaly, one should conclude that Homer meant to place Asclepius in Thessaly—if indeed Tricca was situated only in Thessaly, and if the Messenian claim to a municipality of this name was wholly unfounded.⁶⁸

But could it not be that the Asclepius story is one of those myths that were current in two different sections of Greece? Twofold localizations of one and the same saga were not uncommon.⁶⁹ It is true, the Messenians quoted Nestor's assistance to Machaon (T. 165 ff.) as proof of the Messenian origin of Machaon (T. 38). But those who believed that he was a Thessalian referred to Achilles' interest in him (T. 166 ff.) as evidence that their opinion was supported by Homer (T. 166b). These arguments may well be of equal value.⁷⁰ If so, why should Thessaly have had a better title to Asclepius than Messenia? Why should Tricca be a Thessalian place rather than a Messenian, especially since Oechalia and Ithome most probably were Messenian localities?

As a way out of these difficulties one might for a moment be inclined to believe that a new regional claim arose when the Podalirius figure was inserted into the Homeric Epic. But Podalirius has no original connection with either Messenia or Thessaly. In late centuries, he was revered together with Machaon in both countries (T. 657; T. 161). All other data that concern him alone point to his affiliation with Caria. As the late saga has it, Podalirius, the physician, survived the Trojan War, and on his way home was driven to Caria. When he landed there, the only daughter of the king was ill as a result of an accident. Podalirius restored her health and thus ingratiated himself with her father to such a degree that he was given her hand and part of the country (T. 209).

is based on geographical data; but cf. below, p. 22. Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1649, 64 ff., gives the impression that only the Messenian interpretation of Homer is not borne out by the facts.

⁶⁷ This has been pointed out by Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 228 (T. 164, v. 202: Τρικής; T. 135: Τρικήην).

⁶⁸ For Thessaly as the land of horses, cf. H. D. Westlake, *Thessaly*, 1935, p. 4, n. 3. For Tricca in general, cf. E. Kirsten, Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Triikka, VII A, pp. 146 ff.; 1273 ff.; in my opinion he underrates the difficulties with which the interpretation of the ancient testimony concerning Tricca is faced.

⁶⁹ Cf. e.g. the Thamyras saga, *Iliad*, II, 595, and Leaf's commentary, *ad loc.*

⁷⁰ Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 54, n. 26, who has drawn attention to these claims and counterclaims, is of the opinion that the weight of the Messenian interpretation is neutralized by the Thessalian one. But this is not *a priori* certain.

Having acquired a wife and a home in this none-too-heroic manner, he settled down in Caria and founded two cities, Syrna (T. 209) and Bybassus (T. 209a).⁷¹ He was said to have been buried near the tomb of Calchas in Daunia, that is, in Apulia (T. 205 f.; 158 ff.). Even this Italian legend may easily be understood in connection with the Carian saga, for certain regions of Apulia were colonized by Rhodians and Coans.⁷² Evidently, then, Podalirius was linked up with Caria. That in this province he was an indigenous hero, however, is not likely.⁷³ According to Theopompus (T. 212), the children of Podalirius went from Syrna—the city which supposedly he had founded—to Cos and Cnidus, the famous medical centers of the sixth and fifth centuries B. C. Here in Asia Minor he was believed to be the ancestor of a family of physicians, among them even Hippocrates (T. 213 ff.), who through Podalirius and his wife traced their descent to Asclepius and to royal blood. This they did most probably under the influence of the epic representation of Podalirius, the Asclepiad.⁷⁴ At any rate, if to any country, Podalirius belonged to Caria rather than to Thessaly or Messenia.

The twofold localization of the Asclepius saga cannot be understood,

⁷¹ Another version of the saga presupposes that Podalirius went to Delphi and asked the Oracle where he should settle; the Oracle answered: in Caria (T. 207 f.). This, no doubt, is a late sanction of the Carian Podalirius through Delphi according to the usual concept that colonizations were under the tutelage of the Oracle, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 40. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 48, assumes that Podalirius was mentioned in the *Nostoi*, yet, as he himself admits later on, the fable of Podalirius' return to Caria can be traced only to Timaeus, cf. *ibid.*, p. 50, n. 14.

⁷² T. 205 goes back to Timaeus, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 50, n. 15. Calchas travelled together with Podalirius to Caria (T. 207). For the Coan-Rhodian colonization of Apulia, cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 237. Incidentally, the Apulian worship of Podalirius, who was honored here as healer of men and animals (T. 206), may account for the preference given to Podalirius by Latin poets. Thus the *Homerus Latinus* (first century A. D., cf. M. Schanz, *Geschichte d. römischen Litteratur*, II, 2, 1913, p. 120) names Podalirius as the physician who treated Menelaus (T. 198); for purposeful deviations of this poem from the older saga, cf. *ibid.*, p. 119, n. 2. Quintus Smyrnaeus, in whose poem Podalirius plays so important a rôle (cf. above, pp. 8 f.), is perhaps also influenced by Roman sources, cf. W. Christ-W. Schmid-O. Stählin, *Geschichte d. griechischen Litteratur*, II, 2^o, 1924, p. 963.

⁷³ Most interpreters think that Podalirius was an old Carian hero, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1659, 34 ff. But in Caria no tomb or any independent worship of Podalirius is attested. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 51, believes that the name Podalirius is Carian; cf. also Türk in Roscher, *Lexikon*, III, 2, p. 2589. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 237, holds that the names of the Asclepiads are real names, "culled from Mynian-Thessalian tradition." I do not think that the evidence is sufficient to decide the issue either way, although it seems more likely that the name Podalirius is not Greek. For Machaon's name, cf. below, n. 76. On the other hand, Podalirius' name does not provide evidence for the assumption that he was a medical deity, cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 170; for the ancient etymologies, cf. above, n. 28.

⁷⁴ For the concept of "epic heroes," heroes, that is, who were adopted from the Epic, cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, ch. XI. Whether Podalirius was an historical personality or an invented figure, it is impossible to decide.

then, as a consequence of the introduction of the Podalirius figure into the Epic. But perhaps it may be explained by the later history of Machaon. For this son of Asclepius, even if originally he was a Thessalian, continued to lead an existence of his own only in Messenia. Here he was worshipped as a healing hero. He had a Messenian wife, Anticleia (T. 191), he had sons, Nicomachus and Gorgasus (T. 170), apparently two older healing heroes who were conquered by Machaon.⁷⁵ His influence extended even to the Argolid where Polemocrates (T. 189), Alexanor (T. 187) and Sphyrus (T. 188) were named as his children, these again most probably healing deities of old.

That in Messenia Machaon was revered as a hero who was taken over from the Epic seems certain.⁷⁶ According to the Messenians, Nestor, on his return from Troy, had brought Machaon's corpse to Gerenia (T. 156). His worship was said to date from the time of the Messenian kings (T. 186a). The Messenian saga made even Asclepius a Messenian, the child of a Messenian mother (T. 37), whereas Machaon was believed to be the son of Asclepius and Xanthe (T. 169). And in this birth myth Asclepius was described as the hero of whom Homer spoke, for he was called "the leader of men," the "blameless and strong" (T. 37).⁷⁷ The story was codified by Hesiod as early as the end of the seventh century B. C. The *Catalogue of Ships*, therefore, could well include a reference to the Messenian home of the Asclepiads. The addition of names of cities in accordance with the legendary tradition of certain Greek provinces is a feature not uncommon in this enumeration of the troops before Troy.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ It is the Messenian Machaon to whom Aristotle traced his origin (T. 192 f.; cf. Wilamowitz, *Aristoteles und Athen*, I, 1893, p. 311). Aristotle's ancestors are the only known human descendants of this hero. The epic legend asserted that he had no children (T. 157). No tale was told about his fate after the fall of Troy; he was generally believed to have died before that event. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie*, p. 638, is therefore hardly justified in saying that the stories about his return were lost at an early date.

⁷⁶ Machaon, the Thessalian, could well be taken over by the Messenians. Concerning the worship of epic heroes in countries other than their own, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 9 ff. I should mention that most interpreters consider Machaon a healing hero; cf. e. g. Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Machaon, XIV, pp. 144 ff. Yet, even the name does not furnish conclusive proof for such a theory, cf. *ibid.*, p. 150, 17 ff. Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 170 ff., tries to explain Machaon as "Knetter" (kneader), and Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 228, n. 4, suggests that Machaon is related to μάχεσθαι. Again, as with Podalirius, the historicity of the figure remains uncertain.

⁷⁷ The Greek words used in T. 37 are ἄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν, ἀμύμων and κρατερός; these are typical epithets of epic heroes, cf. e. g. *Iliad*, II, 837; XXI, 546.

⁷⁸ For such interpolations in the *Catalogue of Ships*, cf. e. g. *Iliad*, II, 557-8 (Salamis is added to Athens), for this passage in particular, G. M. Bolling, *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer*, 1925, pp. 16; 73; cf. also Wilamowitz, *S. B. Berl.*, 1925, p. 45, n. 2. The time of the *Catalogue of Ships* is difficult to determine. The lists are usually considered an addition, cf. e. g. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature*, p. 46, n. 77, and are dated around 600 B. C.; cf. e. g. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 151,

From all that has been said it is unlikely that the Asclepius saga originally was localized in two different regions. Homer's testimony seems to place Machaon, and thereby Asclepius, in Thessaly. This is well in agreement even with that report on Asclepius which Homer himself apparently followed. For the fact that Asclepius was associated with Chiron, the wise Centaur, skilled in the knowledge of drugs,⁷⁹ suggests that Asclepius was a well-known figure in Thessalian mythology. Chiron was a Thessalian hero; he was living on Mount Pelion which was renowned for its herbs.⁸⁰ Asclepius, therefore, should likewise be a Thessalian. Of course, one might argue that Asclepius, as a physician, became related to Chiron, the inventor of medicine, and on account of this connection was subsequently made a Thessalian.⁸¹ The data reviewed so far do not admit of a choice between these two possibilities of interpreting the Chiron episode, which seems to form the nucleus of the Asclepius saga. The decision depends upon the character of the legend as a whole, and in order to make such an evaluation, it is necessary to question other witnesses. Later writers, not much inferior to Homer in their claim to authority, have more to tell about the physician Asclepius.

2. THE HEROIC LEGEND

The proper legend of a hero must give his ancestry, the tale of his birth and education, his deeds and his death. Concerning Asclepius, a poem of Pindar's is the earliest testimony preserved in which all these data are set forth coherently and in detail.¹ Asclepius, as Pindar relates

and F. Jacoby, *Die Einschaltung des Schiffskatalogs in die Ilias*, S. B. Berl., phil.-hist. Klasse, 1932, pp. 572 ff. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 168, seems the only one to take the lines in question as composed by Homer whom he places at around 900 B. C. I cannot concur with his argument. That the *Catalogue of Ships*, even if relatively late, reflects earlier traditions seems certain; it is in the main intended to give a picture of the state of affairs in the eighth century, cf. H. Berve, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 1931, p. 50. But supposing the enumeration were older, this would still not invalidate the interpretation given. The Messenian saga itself may have originated in the eighth century, cf. below, p. 33, n. 40. Whether the poet consciously combined two regional sagas, whether for him all these cities were situated either in Messenia or in Thessaly, I do not presume to decide. The inconsistencies which even the ancients noticed (cf. above, p. 17) cannot be resolved. They point to the fact that here intrinsically different traditions were amalgamated without too much regard for historical accuracy.

⁷⁹ Cf. above, pp. 4 f.

⁸⁰ For Chiron as a Thessalian and the inhabitant of the Pelion Mountain, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, 1, pp. 19 ff.

⁸¹ Many sagas, in the beginning, had no specific localizations whatever; they were locally fixed only when through the Epic they were transformed into heroic legends. Cf. Wilamowitz, S. B. Berl., 1925, p. 60, and below, p. 63, n. 36.

¹ That Pindar recounts the heroic saga is certain: he himself refers to Asclepius as "hero" (T. I, v. 7).

(T. 1, *vv.* 8 *ff.*), was the son of Apollo and Coronis. His mother, when with child by the god, fell in love with a mortal. The god, having discovered her unfaithfulness, sent Artemis to kill Coronis. His child, however, he himself saved and put it under Chiron's care. Educated by this friendly sage Asclepius grew up and became a great physician, skillful in everything that pertains to medicine, a helper of men in their distress. Yet he was given to unlawful greed. For money's sake he dared to heal those who were doomed to die. Therefore, Zeus, the king of gods and men, the administrator of justice, slew Asclepius with his thunderbolt, thus rightly punishing the crime of the licentious son of a licentious mother. So Pindar. His poem has all the features of an ancient tragedy. Generation after generation falls into crime; men are at the mercy of their passions; they are irreverent toward the gods and thereby bring about their own fall.

It was not Pindar's version of the saga, most familiar to modern men, that in antiquity was generally accepted. Rather was the Asclepius myth handed down from one century to the other in the form attested by Apollodorus, the mythographer (T. 3). He speaks of two genealogies of Asclepius. In both, Apollo was the father, but the mother in the one was Arsinoë, in the other—and according to Apollodorus this was held true only by some—it was Coronis. Summarizing, however, only the Coronis story, Apollodorus tells about Coronis' having been killed by Apollo because she intended to marry Ischys, about Asclepius, her child, who was saved by the god and entrusted to Chiron from whom he learned the arts of hunting and of medicine. He became an especially good surgeon; he healed the sick and he revived the dead. But besides being a physician, he was a sorcerer as well. Athena had shared with him the blood of the Gorgon which he used for the benefit of men no less than for their destruction. Finally Zeus killed Asclepius because he was afraid that the privileges of the gods would be infringed upon if men no longer were prey to death and thus were led to irreverence. Apollo resented the punishment imposed upon his son and took vengeance on the Cyclops who had furnished the thunderbolt with which Zeus slew Asclepius. Whereupon Apollo in turn was punished by the father of the gods for his uprising against the highest authority and barely escaped utter destruction. Thus the common saga about Asclepius' life and death, composed no doubt in a spirit quite other than that exhibited in Pindar's verses.²

² That the Coronis story in antiquity was more popular than that of Arsinoë follows from the testimonies and is also in agreement with the fact that Apollodorus' work is

Whatever the reasons for the differences in the two accounts just referred to, he who reads these stories after having examined Homer's representation of Asclepius will immediately ask whether this Asclepius, the son of Apollo, is the Asclepius whom the epic poet had in mind, whether this is the physician whom Homer introduced into his world, clad in the armor of a prince. Apollodorus, the Hellenistic scholar, did not hesitate to take this for granted. To him, Asclepius, the son of Coronis or Arsinoë by Apollo, was somewhat older than Achilles, as he concludes from the fact that Asclepius participated in the enterprise of the Argonauts, whereas his son Machaon was one of the fellow soldiers of Achilles in the siege of Troy (T. 5).⁸ Apollodorus, it seems, saw no difficulty in identifying the Asclepius of the later legend with the Homeric Asclepius. No one will dare to follow him without having found out first when the saga of Asclepius, Apollo's son, originated, and whether Homer could have been familiar with this legend.

i. Reconstruction of the Hesiodic Version

Asclepius, who descended from Coronis or Arsinoë, was undoubtedly mentioned in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, written around 600 B. C.⁴ Both genealogies were recounted in this work. Of both only fragments are extant, but the main content of the stories told by Hesiod has long been reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty.⁵ In view of the importance of this reconstruction for the history of the Asclepius legend it would hardly do here simply to recount its results. Moreover, essential details are still debated, and the tendency of the whole myth by which alone its date can be determined must, I think, be understood otherwise than is usually done.⁶

"an accurate record of what the Greeks in general believed," cf. *Apollodorus*, ed. J. G. Frazer, Introduction, p. XVII [Loeb]. Why Apollodorus himself states that only some believed in Asclepius' descent from Coronis, and yet recounts this genealogy alone, I cannot explain. For the Arsinoë myth, cf. below, pp. 32 f.

⁸ For an evaluation of Apollodorus' method and thought as represented in T. 5, cf. F. Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, II, Kommentar, p. 773, 30 ff.

⁴ Niese and Kirchhoff date the *Catalogue* between 620 and 580 B. C.; Wilamowitz says: "not long before 600." Cf. Schmid-Stählin, *Geschichte d. griech. Literatur*, I, 1, pp. 267; 269; 269, n. 2.

⁵ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 57 ff., an admirable analysis indeed.

⁶ In my discussion of the evidence I shall not, as does Wilamowitz, begin with a comparison of Hesiod and Pindar who deviates greatly from the former, but rather reconstruct the content of the Hesiodic poem from the testimony of those writers who are known to have followed the *Catalogue* closely. I should add that if it seems possible now to understand certain details of the myth as well as its general meaning in a new way, this is due to a large extent to the later studies of Wilamowitz on Greek mythology and religion.

To start with the Coronis saga which in antiquity was the more popular one: Coronis, according to Hesiod, was a young maiden living in Thessaly, near the Boeabaean lake, in the Dotian plain (T. 21); she married Ischys, the son of Elatus; a raven reported her marriage to Apollo, who at that time happened to be in Pytho and was unaware of what had taken place (T. 22). That is all that the Hesiodic fragments tell expressly about Coronis. Although none of the lines extant from Hesiod designate this Coronis as the mother of Asclepius by Apollo or allude to her having been with child when she became the bride of Ischys, unquestionably it was she about whom Hesiod meant to speak. The ancients always quoted the Hesiodic verses as referring to Coronis, the mother of Asclepius by Apollo.⁷ Moreover, the crow's report to Apollo, to which Hesiod himself makes reference (T. 22), indicates that in the poet's opinion the god had reason to be concerned with Coronis and her marriage to Ischys.

As for the events which occurred after Apollo had received the bad tidings, Pherecydes, in a relatively early paraphrase of the Hesiodic tale, says (T. 24) that, on Apollo's bidding, Artemis killed Coronis and many other women; Apollo himself, however, slew Ischys, while he delivered Asclepius to Chiron.⁸ If Hesiod narrated so much, he must also have assumed what all the later representations of the heroic saga maintain: that the unborn child was saved from his mother's womb.⁹ Hesiod, furthermore, must have recounted some of the accomplishments of Asclepius, the skillful physician, who even revived the dead and consequently was killed by Zeus; this can be concluded from Acusilaus, who was the first to transpose the Hesiodic genealogies into prose and who mentions the Coronis myth for the first time after Hesiod.¹⁰ Acusilaus attests that Zeus slew Asclepius (T. 106) and that Apollo subsequently killed the Cyclops who had furnished the thunderbolt with which Asclepius was destroyed; that as punishment for this deed Zeus intended to throw

⁷ Cf. e.g. *Scholia in Pindarum, Ad Pythias*, III, 52 a.

⁸ T. 24 speaks only of the death of many women, but it is clear from the context that Coronis too was killed. That Pherecydes told the Coronis myth in agreement with Hesiod follows from his reference to the crow; cf. in general F. Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, I, Kommentar, p. 389, 1 ff., and below, pp. 29 f. Concerning the localization of the saga by Hesiod, Pherecydes and others, cf. below, n. 45. The Hesiodic Fragment 124 [Rzach] may perhaps be part of the Coronis poem. In that case, it would afford direct evidence for a connection between Asclepius and Chiron, but the content of the lines is so vague that such an identification necessarily remains uncertain. It is also possible that the fragment belonged to the Jason saga, cf. Hesiod, *Fr.* 19 [Rzach].

⁹ Concerning this detail of the birth legend, cf. below, pp. 36 f.

¹⁰ For Acusilaus as a transcriber of Hesiod, cf. Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, I, Kommentar, p. 375, 42; that he copied the Coronis saga follows from T. 23.

Apollo into Tartarus, but on the intercession of Leto was satisfied with making him serve as a thrall to a mortal (T. 107b).¹¹ One might claim even direct evidence for the fact that the latter events were recounted in the Coronis poem. For those testimonies which state that Hesiod spoke about Asclepius' death (T. 105 f.)¹² and Leto's mediation (T. 107b) may well refer to the Coronis *Eoee*.¹³

Like all the other poems that formed part of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, the Coronis song, the outlines of which have now become clear, cannot be dated earlier than the end of the seventh century B. C.¹⁴ Does this imply that the myth which is told here was also composed at that time, be it by the poet himself, or by somebody else? Or is it more probable that the legend was invented at an earlier period? If it were correct that the story as it stands was written down as propaganda for the Delphic Oracle, as is generally believed, one should conclude that the myth itself cannot have been earlier than the seventh century. For the great reform movement which brought about the rise of the typically Delphic religion did not set in before 700 B. C.¹⁵ Now, it is true that the Apollo of whom Hesiod speaks resided in Delphi (T. 22). But this fact does not necessarily imply that he was the "Delphic Apollo" in the strict sense of the

¹¹ Acusilaus himself gives only the bare facts (Asclepius' death, if the fragment is rightly restored [cf. Jacoby, *op. cit.*, p. 378, 14 ff.]; Zeus' decision; Leto's plea; Apollo's servitude); connection and motivation of the events I have supplied in accordance with the usual form of the saga (cf. e.g. T. 3 and T. 108; that Pherecydes here speaks of the sons of the Cyclops instead of the Cyclops themselves, is a later rationalization of the myth). Since this part of the saga is always given in an identical fashion, such a restoration seems unobjectionable.

¹² As regards the expression *Ἀητοῖδην* for Asclepius, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 64, n. 37, but cf. also L. Weber, *Philologus*, LXXXVII, 1932, p. 394.

¹³ It must be stressed, however, that all these Hesiodic fragments at first glance would seem to belong to the Arsinoë story (cf. below, pp. 32 f.) with which they were usually connected until Wilamowitz restored the Coronis poem. For the killing of the Cyclops is expressly attested as part of the Arsinoë *Eoee* (T. 107a; cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 79). Consequently, as far as the direct evidence goes, T. 105, 106, 107b, which enlarge on the circumstances following this event, should be considered as belonging to the Arsinoë fragments, and it is strange that Wilamowitz, *ibid.*, and all other scholars should speak of the Cyclops and their death as "also" mentioned in the Arsinoë poem. As a matter of fact, the assumption that these testimonies can be claimed for the Coronis *Eoee* rests only on the authority of Acusilaus and on the agreement of all later witnesses concerning this feature.

¹⁴ For the date of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, cf. above, n. 4.

¹⁵ For the common interpretation of the tendency of the Coronis story, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 72: "Der Gott von Delphi steht überall im Mittelpunkt der Handlung. . . . Ich möchte es gradezu ein delphisches Gedicht nennen." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 76: "Die Eoee benutzt Asklepios nur für eine Episode zum Ruhme des Apollon." Cf. also L. Malten, *Kyrene, Philologische Untersuchungen*, XX, 1911, p. 160, n. 1; Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1647, 14 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 75; Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 395. For the date of the Delphic reform, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 34, and for the concept of the Delphic Apollo, *ibid.*, pp. 26 ff.

word. Homer, too, knows of the Apollo in Delphi. Nevertheless, his Apollo is of a character quite different from that of the later god of Delphi.¹⁶ The same must be said of the Apollo of whom Hesiod sings. For while the "Delphic Apollo" is the interpreter of Zeus' will, the preserver of law and order, the persecutor of any blood guilt, the Apollo of the Coronis myth dares to oppose Zeus, to revolt against his will; he avenges Asclepius' death by slaying the Cyclops. Under these circumstances, is it permissible to claim that Hesiod's Apollo is the god, as he was later venerated in Delphi?

Yet, the Delphic tendency of the poem, it is maintained, is definitely established by Apollo's repentance recounted at the end of the Coronis story. The god became a thrall to a mortal (T. 107b), to Admetus as another testimony (T. 107c) specifies. Consequently, scholars have even gone so far as to assert that in the *Eoee* Apollo helped Admetus in assuaging Artemis' wrath and in regaining Alcestis. Both Apollo and his sister thus finally appear as the holy and benign protectors of men; here, a conversion of the gods is represented in the true spirit of the Delphic Oracle.¹⁷ Recent research, however, has shown that such a claim certainly is exaggerated. It is impossible to prove that the Admetus-Alcestis episode was referred to at all in the Coronis song.¹⁸ To be sure, Apollo is made to pay penalty for his misdeeds. Still, the god's servitude to a mortal, to Admetus, may have been introduced in an attempt to reconcile the new, the Delphic, concept of Apollo with that of an earlier period.¹⁹ The god, as he is represented throughout the legend with the exception of the final episode, is a wrathful god rather than a mild and lawful deity.

This becomes abundantly clear if one takes into consideration not only what Apollo does, but also the motives which are ascribed to him, especially his intentions in killing Coronis. The god punishes her after he has heard that she married Ischys (T. 22). Why does he do so? The fact that Coronis, in spite of her being with child by Apollo, becomes

¹⁶ For Delphi as the seat of Apollo, cf. *Iliad*, IX, 404-5; for the Homeric Apollo in general, Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, pp. 324 ff.

¹⁷ Cf. especially Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 72-3.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Lesky, *Alkestis, Der Mythos und das Drama*, *Wiener Sitzb., phil.-hist. Klasse*, CCIII, 1927, Abh. 2, pp. 50-54; cf. also H. Drexler, *Gnomon*, III, 1927, p. 443; L. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 403. In this connection it should also be remembered that Acusilaus who follows the Coronis story does not mention Admetus, but speaks only of "a mortal" with whom Apollo served (T. 107b). The Hesiodic fragment in which Admetus' name is given may have been taken from the Arsinoë story for which even the Admetus-Alcestis saga would make a fitting end indeed, cf. below, n. 39.

¹⁹ Thus Anaxandrides, the Delphian, made Apollo serve with a mortal because he killed the Pythian dragon, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 38, n. 4.

the wife of another is nothing unheard-of in the world of ancient mythology; on the contrary, it is quite usual for a god's love to marry a mortal.²⁰ Acusilaus claims that Coronis accepted Ischys as her husband "for fear of contempt" (T. 23). This may be a rational explanation for what the old saga did not think worth explaining because it was self-evident; or it may be the reason adduced by Hesiod.²¹ At any rate, it is quite certain that Coronis could not marry in solemn ceremony against the wishes of her father who had to give the bride away. Nor had the father any reason for opposing the wedlock of his daughter with Ischys, her kinsman who, according to ancient custom, was the appropriate husband for her.²² No, Phlegyas could only wish for the union between Ischys and Coronis, and Coronis when marrying Ischys did so with her father's consent.²³ Coronis, then, acted as she was allowed or even expected to do. What right had Apollo to punish her, to take her life?

²⁰ That Hesiod speaks of a legal marriage between Coronis and Ischys is now generally recognized, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 59; Lesky, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6; Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 393 (note in T. 22 especially the words γῆμε; ιερῆς ἀπὸ δαιτός). For the naive attitude of the ancient saga, cf. the stories of Europa (Hesiod, *Fr.* 30 [Rzach]) and of Leda and Alcmene, and in general Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 59.

²¹ Cf. Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, I, Kommentar, p. 378, 20-21: "(Acusilaus) fügt . . . einen rationalistischen Einzelzug ein." The Greek term κατὰ δέος ὑπεροψίας is ambiguous. Is Coronis afraid of the contempt of men, or of the negligence of the god, as is Marpessa (cf. Bacchylides, 20 [Kenyon])? The insistence on Coronis' preferring a mortal seems to point to the latter interpretation.

²² In general, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 59. Not even Pindar dares to impute that Coronis' marriage would be objectionable; that is why he changes this feature of the old saga, cf. below, p. 31. For Phlegyas, the enemy of Apollo, cf. below, n. 30 and p. 35.

²³ That the Hesiodic poem viewed the events in this light I find also confirmed by Apollodorus' words (T. 3): καὶ φασιν ἐρασθῆναι ταύτης Ἀπόλλωνα [sc., τῆς Κορωνίδος] καὶ εὐθὺς συνελθεῖν· τὴν δὲ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς γνώμην ἐλομένην Ἰσχυὶ τῷ Καινέως ἀδελφῷ συνοικεῖν. The text of the passage is corrupt, but certain changes are more or less agreed upon. All editors and interpreters read τὴν δὲ instead of τῆς δὲ (R?), τοῦ δὲ Δ. On the other hand, ἐλομένην is read instead of ἐλωμν' R, ἐλωμένου R^a, ἐλομένου Δ by Wagner; it is bracketed by Frazier [Loeb]. Lesky, *op. cit.*, p. 48, keeps ἐλομένου, but his explanation and the addition of τὸν θεῖον γαμβρὸν which it necessitates is rightly refuted by Drexler, *op. cit.*, p. 444, who himself proposes ἐλέσθαι, a very plausible emendation; Wilamowitz' restitution of the text, *Isyllos*, pp. 62 f., is now generally rejected as going too far. What Apollodorus wishes to say is in the main clear; Coronis chooses to marry Ischys (for συνοικεῖν = marry, cf. Apollodorus, I, 7, 9: ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτῇ τῇ παρθένῳ ἐλέσθαι ὁποτέρῳ βούλεται συνοικεῖν). But what does he mean by παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς γνώμην? This phrase usually is translated "against her father's will," and Lesky and Drexler, *loc. cit.*, consider it equivalent to Pindar's words κρύβδαν πατρός (T. 1, v. 13). Yet certainly "without her father's knowledge" and "against her father's will" are not identical expressions. Moreover, Apollodorus in his account obviously follows Hesiod, not Pindar, for he speaks of Coronis' marriage and he alludes to the story of the raven which Pindar suppresses; cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 63, and below, p. 31. The expression παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς γνώμην therefore should, I think, not be taken to mean "against her father's will," but rather "in accordance with her father's will." For παρὰ in this sense, cf. Kühner-Gerth, *Griech. Grammatik*, II, 1, 1898, p. 513, and J. Bernays, *Die Dialoge des Aristoteles*, 1863, p. 138.

Perhaps Apollo had demanded of Coronis that she should not wed, hence in not following his wishes she violated no human law, but rather the personal command of the god. Later versions of the legend intimate such an attitude on the part of the god. They claim that the raven from whom Apollo heard about Coronis (T. 22) was assigned to her by the god as her guardian; some even say that the raven was expressly charged with protecting Coronis from any violation (T. 46; 48; 49). Yet not only does such an assumption presuppose that Coronis becomes the love of Ischys, not his wife, as she does in Hesiod²⁴—the raven as protector of Coronis certainly is a later transformation of the myth. The guardian is a typical figure of the love poetry of the decadence, in which the lover is always suspicious of his beloved and by all possible means tries to guard her and himself against the interference of a rival.²⁵ In Hesiod, the raven cannot have made his report to Apollo because the god had charged him with watching Coronis; the raven must have acted on his own account, as other sources aver (T. 44; 45). Neither by human nor by divine law was Coronis bound to renounce marriage.

If nevertheless the god punished her, he did so because he has a bad and quick temper. His anger is easily roused, and if it is, he vents it without paying attention to reason or justice. Thus, when the raven told him about Coronis, the god was infuriated and, in return for the report, punished the bird by changing his white plumage into black (T. 2, *vv.* 631 f.; T. 45).²⁶ Now although Apollo had not ordered the bird to watch Coronis, the fowl by informing Apollo of what had happened thought to do a good service to his master, and rightly hoped for a reward.²⁷ But only too true were the warnings which on his way he received from

²⁴ In other words, these reports adapt a feature of Pindar's version, cf. below, p. 31.

²⁵ Cf. e. g. Ovid, *Amores*, II, 2, and in general M. Schanz, *Gesch. d. röm. Litteratur*, II, 1, 1911, p. 301. At best one might regard this feature as a Hellenistic transposition of the old saga, which may have seemed the more plausible since the raven was considered the exemplar of chastity among the birds, cf. Aristotle, *Hist. Animal.*, 488 b 5.

²⁶ The story is most charmingly told by Ovid (T. 45) who follows Callimachus (T. 44); cf. M. Haupt-R. Ehwaldt, *Die Metamorphosen des P. Ovidius Naso*, I, 1915, ad II, 531; M. de Cola, *Callimaco e Ovidio, Studi Palermitani di Filologia Classica*, II, 1937, pp. 44 f.; Wilamowitz' hypothesis that Ovid is dependent on Nicander (*Isyllos*, p. 60, n. 33) was refuted by the discovery of the Callimachus fragment in 1896. Contrary to Wilamowitz' claim, *Isyllos*, pp. 57 f., it is not attested that Hesiod mentioned the change of the raven's plumage. T. 41 speaks of this story only as one generally told. Yet one may safely ascribe it also to Hesiod since Artemidorus' assertion is borne out by all testimonies, except that of Pindar who omits the raven episode altogether.

²⁷ The raven is the sacred bird of Apollo. Wilamowitz' denial of this fact (*Glaube*, I, p. 146) is refuted by the testimony of Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 379 d, and Aelian, *Historia Animalium*, I, 48. For other stories concerning Apollo and the raven, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, 1, p. 516, n. 3. In Homer, the bird of Apollo is the ἰρηνῆς (*Iliad*, XV, 237), or the κίρκος (*Odyssey*, XV, 526); the word κόραξ does not occur in the Epic.

a fellow bird who on account of his sad experiences with Athena had urged him not to meddle in affairs that were not of his concern, for the gods do not distinguish between the messenger reporting an offence and the culprit himself who committed it (T. 44; 45). Apollo, irascible and unreasonable as he was, felt hurt (T. 41) and retaliated on whoever was nearest at hand.²⁸ In the same way, the god acted in slaying the Cyclops, who certainly had no responsibility for what Zeus had done to Asclepius but, in furnishing the thunderbolt with which to fell him, had obeyed the command of the king of gods, as was their duty. In the same way, Apollo acted in killing Coronis. She was in her right, but the god did not ask whether she was justified, or whether he himself had wronged her and was now inflicting cruel punishment upon one who was innocent. He was enraged at Coronis, and just as he was quick to take possession of her whom he loved (T. 3), so he was quick to take revenge on her whom he hated.²⁹ Coronis died and with her many others, they too, without guilt, her maidens, her bridegroom (T. 24).³⁰ Certainly, the god who imposes such a fate upon men is the Homeric Apollo, the rash and wrathful deity, not the "Delphic Apollo," the guardian of law and order.³¹

If further proof for this claim were needed, it could easily be found in Pindar's refashioning of the old saga. The prophet of the Delphic god

²⁸ The raven story is the typical tale of the bearer of ill tidings (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 146, n. 1), which at the same time explains why the plumage of the bird is black. The myth is told of the raven rather than a raven; cf. also W. Aly, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Mythos, XVI, p. 1396, 55 ff.; *ibid.*, p. 1407, 1 ff. No one will believe that in Hesiod, Apollo was pictured as the sentimental lover, as he was in Ovid, the lover who hates the raven "by which he had been compelled to know the offence that brought his grief" (T. 2, vv. 614 f.). Such an attitude fits the spirit of Hellenistic and Roman love poetry rather than that of the Hesiodic saga. It is significant that Ovid makes the god immediately repent of what he has done and dispute his right to any action whatsoever (T. 2, vv. 612 ff.).

²⁹ That Apollodorus' words ἐρασθῆναι ταύτης Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ εὐθέως συνελθεῖν (T. 3), characterizing Apollo's rash love, are probably taken from Hesiod is a most plausible suggestion of Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 70, n. 48. Concerning the punishment of Coronis it is stated by Servius, who also has preserved other details of the old saga (cf. n. 30), that the god acts *iratus* (T. 46); cf. also T. 2, v. 613.

³⁰ Servius reports (T. 27) that Phlegyas, enraged at the violator of his daughter, set Apollo's temple aflame and therefore was killed by the god. This account is quite singular; in its rationalizing form it may indicate that in the old saga Phlegyas, too, suffered death from the hands of Apollo. Cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 395, n. 8.

³¹ There are other features of the Coronis story which can be understood only under the presupposition that the myth reflects the Homeric spirit rather than that of Delphi. Artemis, here, is still the goddess who brings sudden death upon women, as she does in Homer, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 179; Apollo and Artemis together inflict death upon Coronis and Ischys, just as they do upon the children of Niobe, cf. Homer, *Iliad*, XXIV, 602 ff. The Delphic Apollo, on the other hand, has nothing whatever to do with death, cf. Wilamowitz, *ibid.*, II, p. 42 (curiously enough, Wilamowitz himself, *ibid.*, I, p. 315, says: "Dass Apollon und Artemis Menschen bei Homer erschossen, später höchstens in Nachahmung Homers wie bei Koronis . . .").

could not help altering the legend completely so as to make it agree with his concept of Apollo. The ancients themselves noticed his changes and attributed them to his religious criticism (T. 41; 42). He could take over only the bare facts: Coronis' death, Asclepius' salvation, his education through Chiron, his career as a physician and finally his destruction through Zeus. Yet, out of these data, Pindar of necessity created an entirely new myth (T. 1).³² Coronis now does not marry Ischys, her kinsman, with the consent of her father; although she is the love of Apollo she consorts with Ischys, a stranger, concealing her shameless indulgence from her father. However, her crime does not remain hidden from the god who, not through a bird's report, but through his own omniscience, detects Coronis' misdeed.³³ Justly, then, he punishes her for what she has done, not because he is angry with her, but because she has failed to observe the obligation imposed upon her by human and divine law: to wait for the day appointed for her marriage feast. It is for this reason and for no other, that Artemis kills her, rightly, as the poet emphasizes, who is himself not remiss in heaping blame upon Coronis.³⁴ Thus Pindar's Delphic version presents the moral drama in which the transgressions of sinful men are visited upon them by divine justice, whereas the old legend described the fateful tragedy in which men, the playthings of the gods, were innocently destroyed to please the divine whims.

It stands to reason, then, that the original Coronis myth was independent of Delphic influence. It may have been invented at any time after Apollo had taken possession of Delphi, yet before the reform move-

³² For Pindar's changes, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 58 ff.; *id.*, *Pindaros*, 1922, p. 281. Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 397 ff., tries to prove that Pindar's representation of the saga is dependent upon earlier sources, among them formulations of Delphic priests. I do not think that this is probable. Pindar's version of the Asclepius myth seems original with him. For the attitude of the Delphic Oracle towards the saga, cf. below, n. 35.

³³ It is Pindar's omission of the raven episode which the ancients themselves expressly explained by his religious scruples (T. 41; 42). Omniscience is characteristic of the god of the Delphic Oracle, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 27. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the fact that the reference to the raven, while being in opposition to the concept of the Delphic God and his prophecy, is in agreement with older religious concepts. In Homer, Apollo like all the other gods has a bird as a servant or messenger, cf. above, n. 27; he even appears himself in the disguise of a bird, cf. *Iliad*, XV, 237. For the general significance of birds in early Greek religion, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 148. The raven episode, therefore, is one of the strongest indications of the antiquity of the original Coronis myth.

³⁴ It should be noted that Pindar suppresses the killing of Ischys and the death of the Cyclops. The latter fact in particular, which involves Apollo's opposition to Zeus, under no circumstances could be accommodated to Pindar's concept of Apollo. I have dealt here only with those features which serve to clarify the difference in the Hesiodic and Pindaric representations of Coronis and Apollo. For other discrepancies in their judgment concerning Asclepius, cf. below, n. 93.

ment of the seventh century B. C. Certainly it was not composed as Delphic propaganda or in praise of the Delphic Apollo. Delphi and the Coronis saga belong to worlds wide apart. When the story of Coronis and Apollo was conceived, the thought of men was still dominated by the early amoral concepts concerning gods and mortals and their relation to each other, concerning divine prerogatives and human strength.³⁵

Moreover, it may safely be assumed that the saga, according to which Asclepius was the son of Coronis and Apollo, constitutes the oldest version of the Asclepius legend. At any rate, no other tale known from the testimonies has an earlier or better-founded claim to this title. Even that story which makes Asclepius the son of Apollo and Arsinoë and which is also related in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* must be of later origin. Its real aim is not that of tracing the genealogy of Asclepius, but rather that of establishing the descent of his son Machaon, who was worshipped as a national hero in Messenia (T. 38).³⁶ Arsinoë was a Messenian of royal blood, the daughter of Leucippus, who was widely renowned among the Messenians (T. 36). Besides being the mother of Asclepius Arsinoë had also a daughter, Eriopis, by Apollo (T. 37). Obviously her relation to the god is seen here as the happy union of a mortal woman with a divine partner.³⁷ The raven episode is suppressed. There is no trace of

³⁵ This result implies that the serfdom imposed upon Apollo at the end of the *Eoee* must be understood as an adaptation of the old fable to the spirit of the time in which the Hesiodic poem was written, cf. above, p. 27. This feature does not provide the clue to the meaning of the story itself. Once the essentially Homeric character of the old legend is recognized, one might even hold that the punishment meted out to Apollo is not different from that which the Homeric Zeus inflicts upon other gods or threatens against them in retaliation for their misdeeds; cf. e. g. *Iliad*, I, 580 ff., and VIII, 13 ff. That Zeus intends to throw his disobedient son into Tartarus (T. 107b) reads like a reminiscence of the second of the epic passages just referred to. It is therefore not impossible that the Coronis song may follow the original version throughout. In my opinion no decision in favor of one or the other of these interpretations can be reached. It is noteworthy that the Delphic Oracle did not approve of the Asclepius myth as it was recounted by Hesiod. Still further expurgations were needed before the saga was sanctioned by Delphi, cf. below, p. 68. The necessity of such moralistic changes of the early legends is not taken into account by Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 35, where he points out that the love stories of Apollo were retained as part of the old-inherited myth even by Delphi.

³⁶ Hesiod mentions Asclepius and Xanthe as Machaon's parents (T. 169). Since it is known that the Arsinoë myth was intended to make Asclepius a compatriot of the Messenians—Pausanias even charges that it was invented in their interest (T. 36)—this testimony must be part of the Arsinoë myth, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 77 f.

³⁷ That Arsinoë had a daughter Eriopis is attested by Asclepiades (T. 37), but it cannot be decided with certainty which of the lines preserved in the testimony are Hesiodic, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 79. Concerning Arsinoë in general, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 77 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1279 ff.; p. 1648, 64 ff. Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 77, believes that Arsinoë originally was not a member of the Leucippus family; for conjectures as regards her earlier relationship to other families, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1649, 41 ff. Leucippus is sometimes connected with Laconia (T. 34). The Homeric

lawlessness or violence in this story, as is fitting for a myth which is destined to serve religious and political aspirations. Nevertheless it is affirmed that Apollo killed the Cyclops (T. 107 a).³⁸ In view of the general tendency of the poem, this can be understood only under the presupposition that at the time when the Arsinoë genealogy was put in verse, the slaying of the Cyclops was a feature already so closely connected with the Asclepius saga that it could not be omitted.³⁹ The Arsinoë poem, like the Coronis song, was composed probably around 600 B. C. Yet, the Arsinoë myth must have been preceded by the Coronis saga.⁴⁰ It is the latter which, according to the evidence available, represents the archetype of the Asclepius legend, a story that originated in a world where the gods were still viewed as the epic poet had depicted them.

Does this result imply that Homer knew of Asclepius, the son of Apollo and Coronis? Was it this hero whom he made the father of Machaon? As long as the date of the myth alone serves as a touchstone for settling these questions, one might be inclined to say that this may have been the case, for the Coronis saga originated before 700 B. C. On the other hand, when those books were written in which Machaon's treatment of Menelaus is described, a physician was hardly esteemed so highly that he would have been considered the descendant of a god. Such an assumption seems more fitting for the age of the Cyclic Epic, when medicine became increasingly important and when Machaon and Podalirius, too, were said to be of divine origin.⁴¹ It is more likely, therefore, that a saga, later than the one which Homer followed, elevated Asclepius to the kinship with Apollo. Asclepius, Chiron's friend, through Homer became a king; the Epic endowed him with greater human dignity than he had formerly possessed. The later transformation of the original tale, by making As-

Hymn to Apollo possibly refers to a fight between Apollo and another of Arsinoë's wooers, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 80 ff.

³⁸ Cf. above, n. 13, where it was pointed out that in fact the Cyclops incident is directly attested only for the Arsinoë poem.

³⁹ On the other hand, the Admetus-Alcestitis myth would be an appropriate conclusion of the Arsinoë story, cf. above, n. 18. For in both sagas the gods are seen as the friends of men. An interesting hypothesis concerning the connection of Arsinoë and Alcestitis is proposed by Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 79, n. 52.

⁴⁰ This is also the opinion of Wilamowitz, though his argument is different from mine, cf. *Isyllos*, p. 80. At the end of the seventh century Messenia fought her second war against Sparta. At this time of national uprising an interest in the Messenian saga is well understandable. But one should believe that the myth itself originated before 700, that is, in the period of Messenian independence, cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, 1937, p. 120. On the other hand, the Messenian saga seems later than the Homeric Epic, for as has been shown above, p. 21, Asclepius in the Arsinoë poem appears as a truly epic hero.

⁴¹ Cf. above, p. 15.

clepius the son of a god, formed the first link in the chain which was to bind Asclepius to the immortals.⁴²

ii. The Meaning of the Legend

The main content and the date of the Asclepius legend have now been determined. But the data reviewed so far do not give more than the broad outlines of the saga. Its purport has not yet been clarified. What kind of myth is the one attached to Asclepius? Does it echo certain facts in the lives of real individuals or tribes? Is it designed to explain a cult or a ritual? Or if it is neither a historical nor a hieratic story, does it symbolize in images of human fantasy the hopes and fears of men, their estimation of life, of the destiny and fate of mortal beings? One cannot hope to grasp the significance of the Asclepius figure without deciding which one of these meanings applies to the Asclepius myth.⁴³ A close scrutiny of the details reported about Asclepius, of the local and temporal transformations of the saga, should make it possible to ferret out the gist of the oldest draft of the legend and thus to determine its original import.

A hero, a being half human, half divine, must be a member of a human family; he must also be assigned to some native land. Asclepius' mother, according to Hesiod, was Coronis (T. 22), the daughter of Phlegyas and the sister of Ixion (T. 27). She thus belonged to a race which played an important rôle in the Thessalian saga. The Phlegyans probably were a conquering people who of old held the regions of Thrace and Thessaly under their sway.⁴⁴ That Coronis lived in the Dotian plain, as Hesiod said (T. 21), was generally agreed upon in antiquity. Pher-

⁴² Such "promotions" of human beings are not unusual. Meleager for instance in the Homeric Epic is a mortal, while in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* he appears as the son of Ares; cf. Wilamowitz, *Die griechische Heldensage*, II, S.B. Berl., phil.-hist. Klasse, 1925, p. 216.

⁴³ For a general appreciation of ancient mythology, cf. the studies of Wilamowitz and Weinreich, referred to above, p. 7, n. 18. Cf. also A. Lang, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*¹¹, 1913 s.v. Myth; Farnell, *The Value and the Methods of Mythologic Study*, in *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 1919-20, pp. 37 ff.; H. J. Rose, *Modern Methods in Classical Mythology*, 1930; Pfister, *Bursian*, 1930, pp. 146 ff.; W. Aly, *Pauly-Wissowa*, s.v. Mythos, XVI, pp. 1374 ff.

⁴⁴ Concerning the Phlegyans who for a long time were considered merely a mythical tribe, cf. *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1643, 65 ff.; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 52, n. 1; for Coronis, cf. *Pauly-Wissowa*, s.v. Koronis, XI, p. 1431, 57 ff. Whether she was the genuine mother of Asclepius (*Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1644, 53), or whether her name is only poetic fiction (Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 79, n. 52), it is impossible to say before the myth has been interpreted as a whole, cf. below, p. 64, n. 37. The name Coronis often appears in the heroic saga; it may signify a crow, the symbol of longevity, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 515, n. 3.

cydes, Pindar and almost all the poets and mythographers concurred in this assumption of the *Eoee*. There were only slight variations as to the exact location of Coronis' home within that region.⁴⁵ The hero Asclepius, then, was born in the Dotian plain. To Hesiod, he was a Thessalian, just as he probably was in the eyes of the poet of the Homeric Epic.⁴⁶

Within the framework of the whole legend one might understand Asclepius' descent on his mother's side as an indication that in his physical make-up there were ingredients of daring enterprise, of bold venture. Phlegyas and his kin were notorious for their ruthlessness and their hostile attitude towards the gods.⁴⁷ Beyond this, the reports concerning Coronis yield hardly anything, nor can they be expected to be of great consequence. They concern Asclepius' human existence alone, and in the legend of a hero the mother's task is merely that of bearing the child who is destined for fame.⁴⁸ It is her divine partner through whom her son shares in superhuman power and through whom he acquires the strength which he needs for his exploits.

Now in all versions of the myth, Asclepius is said to be the son of Apollo; with this god and no other is he connected throughout antiquity.⁴⁹ To explain the relationship between the two, it would not do to reason on racial or geographical grounds. Apollo was revered everywhere; any

⁴⁵ Hesiod adds that Coronis lived near the Boebean Lake (T. 21); cf. also Pindar, T. 1, v. 34. Pherecydes speaks of Lacerea near the Amyrus river (T. 24); cf. also Apollonius Rhodius, T. 15; 28. Incidentally, Lacerea may be a mythical place, cf. L. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 401, and since the bird from which Coronis' name may be derived is once called *λακέρυζα κορώνη*, "a cawing crow" (Hesiod, *Opera*, 747), etymological play may have been responsible for the connection of Coronis and Lacerea (cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 60, n. 32).

⁴⁶ Cf. above, p. 22. Note moreover that the Dotian plain, the Amyrus river and Lacerea, the places where Coronis lived, are all located in the neighborhood of Mount Pelion where Chiron resided, cf. Strabo, IX, p. 442; XIV, p. 647.

⁴⁷ In general cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 26 ff. Concerning Phlegyas and Apollo, cf. also above, n. 30.

⁴⁸ Cf. Aeschylus, *Eumenidae*, 658 ff. Apollo himself here advocates the patrilineal theory, and even the poems of the *Catalogue*, although they glorify the mothers, do not profess matrilineal beliefs, cf. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 267.

⁴⁹ This fact is the more remarkable, since in Greek mythology variations as to a hero's father are nothing unheard of. W. A. Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, 1925, p. 254, and L. Dyer, *Studies of the Gods in Greece* etc., 1891, p. 219, speak also of Zeus as the father of Asclepius, adducing as evidence P. Gardner, *New Chapters in Greek History*, 1892, p. 358, however, says only that Zeus and Asclepius later were identified. Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, p. 85, lists Aristetes, Arsippus, Hephaestus, Ischys, Elatus, Lapithas, Sydykus as "fathers" of Asclepius. Sydykus is the father of the Phoenician god Asclepius (T. 825). Lapithas is not mentioned at all by Eustathius, *ad B 732*, the passage to which Walton refers (at another place, T. 30, Eustathius merely says that Asclepius sprang from the Lapithian race). All the other names given by Walton are connected with the genealogy of the three Asclepii (T. 379 f.), distinguished by the "sondernden Theologen," and these *stemmata* do not concern the son of Coronis.

Greek tribe could consider him the father of a hero. Nor is it permissible to assume, as is usually done, that the Delphic Apollo adopted Asclepius, delegating to him the realm of medicine of which he wanted to dispose, because his medical functions did not fit his newly acquired character. The Coronis poem, the oldest attestation of Asclepius' kinship with Apollo, is not a tribute to the god of Delphi.⁵⁰ Rather is it Apollo, as he is known from the Epic, who became the father of Asclepius in the tale told by the Hesiodic poet. But what is the significance of Asclepius' being treated as the son of Apollo? Is this divine genealogy merely a title to higher rank and greater dignity? Or is he related to Apollo, the representative of one particular task, one of the many skills over which this god presided?

From the rôle which in the old saga was attributed to Apollo in connection with Asclepius' birth it seems to follow that Apollo was represented here as the god of medicine, the sender of disease and the liberator from illness.⁵¹ Pindar, the oldest witness (T. 1, *vv.* 43 f.), relates that when Coronis was burning on the pyre, Apollo snatched the unborn child from her corpse. The god seized the babe from the flames and from its mother's womb, says Ovid (T. 2, *vv.* 629 f.). Having cut open Coronis' womb, Apollo extracted the child from it, says Hyginus (T. 48; cf. also T. 47). Much as the language of these testimonies differs—Pindar conceals the details, Ovid is less reticent, Hyginus is quite outspoken and technical—all of them agree on one fact: Asclepius was brought forth to light by Apollo. This description of Asclepius' birth is a very singular account indeed, not paralleled in the birth saga of any other hero or god. Besides, Apollo here is made to play the part of a physician, whether the hand of the god, miraculously penetrating Coronis' body, achieved the saving deed, or whether, in rationalization of the inscrutable ways of the deity, he is believed to have performed a regular operation on Coronis.⁵² That the god's action, ascribed to him by the

⁵⁰ Cf. above, pp. 31 f. For the generally accepted view, cf. *e.g.* Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 39: "Die Eoee von Koronis machte den Asklepios, einerlei was er gewessen war, zu seinem sterblichen Sohne. So war die Heilkunst zwar von Apollon gelehrt, aber er brauchte sich nicht mehr selbst mit ihr zu befassen."

⁵¹ For Apollo as the god of medicine, cf. especially Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 97; *Griechische Religion*, I, pp. 507 ff. The pertinent material is collected in Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Apollo, II, p. 15, 52 ff. Cf. also below, p. 56.

⁵² Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 400, n. 15, finds a contradiction between Pindar's report (T. 1) and that of Servius (T. 47); only according to the latter, he says "verfährt . . . Apollon wie ein erfahrener Arzt." It is true that Servius like Hyginus, whom Weber does not mention, deviates from Pindar in his words, but this does not imply a difference in fact, cf. the commentary on the Pindaric verses given by Ch. G. Heyne, *Pindari Carmina*, I-III, 1798, p. 238: "Simpliciter poeta dicit, etsi splendide, utpote de deo, uno gressu facto Apollinem eripuisse flamma puerum, quem mater utero gestabat." Cf.

earliest source, also formed an integral part of the original story seems certain. Otherwise Pindar would hardly have referred to it. Moreover the help of the god was needed. When Coronis died, Asclepius was not yet born.⁵³ If Apollodorus simply says that Apollo snatched Asclepius from the pyre (T. 3), if another unknown authority asserts that Hermes rescued the babe from the flames (T. 26), these reports are only later transformations of the old saga, changes made in agreement with more refined religious concepts, or accommodations to other famous myths.⁵⁴ At any rate, it is the original and unique features that provide the clue to the character of Apollo, as it was viewed when the god was made the father of Asclepius: it was Apollo, the physician, the medical deity of old.

Certainly, this choice was not fortuitous, nor merely an eccentric play of poetic or mythical imagination; it was made on purpose, meant to have symbolic significance. Through his origin from the god of medicine, Asclepius inherited the natural gifts required for the task which he had

also E. C. J. von Siebold, *Versuch einer Geschichte der Geburtshülfe*, I, 1839, pp. 64 ff. In passing it should be pointed out that the Romans called the operation performed by Apollo *sectio Caesarea* and attributed to the god the tutelage over all children who were born in this way (T. 47).

⁵³ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 70, in his recapitulation of the old legend: "Als er die Leiche der Geliebten auf dem Scheiterhaufen sah, da erbarmte sich Apollon wenigstens des ungeborenen Sohnes. Der den Tod gesendet, gab Leben. . ."

⁵⁴ Note that even in T. 3 and T. 26 the child is saved from the pyre where Coronis is burnt; she did not give birth to her son before she died. In this respect the saga remains absolutely consistent. The Delphic Apollo renounced medicine; his medical deeds, therefore, tended to be forgotten, and this might explain Apollodorus' report (T. 3), if he did not simply omit a few words. The source of T. 26 cannot be determined; the version recounted seems to be a contamination of the Hesiodic tale with Pindar's poem (Ischys, the lover of Coronis). Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, p. 77; *Glaube*, I, p. 132, n. 2) finds in the story an influence of the Dionysus myth. This is quite likely as far as the reference to Hermes is concerned, for Hermes is fixed in the birth saga of Dionysus, while in that of Asclepius he is nowhere else mentioned. Farnell's objection (*Hero Cults*, p. 243) to Wilamowitz' claim is not justified. But how did it come about that Hermes was made to play the rôle of Apollo? Some versions of the Dionysus myth are not satisfied with Hermes' carrying the prematurely born babe to Zeus, they make Hermes do with Dionysus what Apollo does with Asclepius: he brings the child forth by a *sectio Caesarea*; cf. Lucian, *Dialogi Deorum*, IX; also Ovid, *Metam.*, III, 310-11. But Hermes is not a physician, as is Apollo. Moreover, the far greater number of authorities, and the older ones at that, assert that Semele gave birth to the child in the moment of death, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 661. Lucian's story, therefore, can only be an adaptation of the Dionysus saga to the Asclepius story. It is impossible to speak of a general and basic similarity of the two tales, as has sometimes been done, e. g. Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. *Koronidae*, XI, p. 1434, 38 ff. Once Hermes had usurped Apollo's art, he could also usurp Apollo's place in the Asclepius story. Beyond this connection between the late myth of Asclepius and that of Dionysus, however, there are no relations of the Asclepius tale to any other birth saga. Farnell, *loc. cit.*, compares it with the story of the *Coronidae*. But here, stars or twins are born from the ashes of their mothers. It is only the name *Coronidae* that this late tale consciously derives from the Asclepius myth, and any dependence of the latter on the former seems out of the question. The original story of Asclepius' birth is unique.

to fulfill and for which his father himself had designated him: the pursuit of medicine. For Apollo, as Pherecydes asserts in his transcription of the Hesiodic poem (T. 24), gave the child into Chiron's custody. Obviously he wanted the Centaur to take care of Asclepius and to educate him in the medical art. Pindar says so expressly: it was Apollo's intention that Asclepius should learn "how to heal mortal men of painful maladies" (T. 1, *vv.* 45-6).⁵⁵ Thus the hero was not merely descended from Apollo, the physician; he was expected by his father to follow the paternal calling. Indeed, no better recommendation of Asclepius, the physician, could be imagined. Sharing through his birth in the power of the god of medicine, expressly chosen by him to be a healer, educated on Apollo's instigation by the sage who was preëminently skilled in medicine, how could Asclepius fail to be a good physician himself? Here, foresight was at work, divine providence, or wise planning on the part of him, whoever he was, who designed the genealogy of Asclepius.

But at this point one might ask: was it really Asclepius' destiny to be a physician and nothing else? Such a career, it seems, is incompatible with the prerogatives of a great hero; such an occupation could hardly have engrossed all his thoughts and activities. Even granted that Asclepius practiced medicine—being a hero, he must have been notable also for his exploits in war and in other ventures. Yet, in fact Asclepius' record as a hero among heroes is not too impressive, as the ancients themselves noticed (T. 265).⁵⁶ Of all the enterprises, famous in Greek mythology, he is said to have participated only in the Voyage of the Argonauts (T. 5; 63 f.) and in the Calydonian Hunt (T. 65), and even these two heroic deeds of his are attested by late authorities alone, that is, by Alexandrian scholars, and have the air of rather stereotyped inventions.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ In general, cf. T. 51 ff. Concerning the subjects of Chiron's instruction, cf. T. 57; as regards those who were educated by him together with Asclepius, cf. T. 51; 56; 58. Only a few sources eliminate Chiron as the teacher of Asclepius and mention Apollo himself as his instructor in medicine (T. 355; 356), whereas others make both, Apollo and Asclepius, students of Chiron (T. 62). In one version (T. 55) Chiron and Asclepius are even more closely connected by the fact that Chiron's death is linked up with the Asclepius story. Since in Homer Chiron was the friend of Asclepius, not his mentor (cf. above, p. 4), it seems most probable that this ancient relationship was changed into that of pupil and teacher when Asclepius became Apollo's son and was entrusted to Chiron by his father. Incidentally, in the eyes of the ancients who were accustomed to ask with whom a physician had studied in order to check on his abilities (cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, p. 92 and p. 109, n. 2) Asclepius' education through Chiron must have been of great significance.

⁵⁶ Modern scholars, too, are unanimous in this verdict, cf. e.g. Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1652, 66 ff.; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 244.

⁵⁷ Thraemer and Farnell (see preceding note) are going too far in discrediting the value of the three references to the heroic activities of Asclepius that are preserved.

As for the Argonauts, Asclepius seems to have been included among them as a famous Thessalian figure. The Voyage of the Argonauts was the foremost Thessalian saga. Moreover, in this myth Chiron was an important character, and Asclepius was thought to have been his pupil after Jason (T. 51), whose son, as Homer says, gave aid to the Greeks before Troy.⁵⁸ How could Asclepius, the Thessalian, the father of Machaon, fail to be included in the list of the Argonauts which the fantasy of the ancients constantly changed in accordance with their varying wishes? As for the Calydonian Hunt, Asclepius may have been mentioned along with others who had participated in the enterprise of the Argonauts and were later engaged in this new venture.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Asclepius' association with the Argonauts and the Calydonian Hunt in some way also fits the Messenian Asclepius. Nestor, the national hero of the Messenians and the friend of Machaon, took part in these two exploits of the heroic age, in fact they are the only ones in which he appears, with the exception of the Trojan War.⁶⁰ Asclepius, then, became a partner in the most famous sagas of those regions of Greece from which he was supposed to have come. It is fair to say that such claims represent fictitious adornments rather than old-inherited and "genuine" beliefs. When Asclepius had risen to a place of primary importance, it seemed impossible to admit that he should not have been connected with these outstanding events.⁶¹

The evidence for Asclepius' heroic exploits being so slight and of such artificial character, modern scholars have been wont to affirm that Asclepius has no real place in the heroic saga, and they have been inclined to add that this is so because Asclepius originally was either a god or a human being.⁶² Yet, such an assertion takes account merely of what

Theodoretus' statement (T. 5) is taken from Apollodorus; that of Hyginus (T. 65) goes back at least to Alexandrian sources (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Mythographie, XVI, p. 1366, 23 ff.); Clement (T. 63) names Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, where Asclepius, however, is not mentioned in the text preserved, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1653, 2. For the participants in the Voyage, cf. *ibid.*, *s.v.* Argonauten, pp. 751-53.

⁵⁸ Concerning the Argonauts in general and Chiron's rôle, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 760 ff.; 770. It is Pindar, who says that Asclepius came to Chiron after Jason (T. 51). This statement may have been one of the sources of the later claim that Asclepius was one of the Argonauts. For Jason's son, cf. *Iliad*, VII, 468-9; XXI, 41. W. Heidel's assertion (*The Heroic Age of Science*, 1933, p. 134, n. 15) that the Greeks generally dated the Argonautic expedition two generations before the Trojan era is incorrect, at least as far as Homer is concerned.

⁵⁹ Cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, esp. pp. 96-97.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ovid, *Metam.*, VIII, 313; Valerius Flaccus, I, 380.

⁶¹ Cf. e. g. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie*, p. 1452, n. 1: "Dass Asklepios Argonaut und Teilnehmer an der kalydonischen Jagd heisst, scheint später frei hinzugefügt zu sein."

⁶² Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1653, 4 ff., reasons that Asclepius must have

might properly be called "heroic deeds"; it disregards all those statements which testify to Asclepius' curing or reviving of other heroes. Undoubtedly, however, the fact that Asclepius is said to have healed the wounds of Heracles (T. 87) gives him a share in the heroic saga, as well deserved as does his active fighting or enduring of danger in the cause of Jason—if not indeed even in the Argonautic expedition Asclepius was a partner merely as a physician, or at best in his twofold capacity as a warrior and a medical man. At least one of his mythical cures must have taken place during the Voyage of the Argonauts;⁶³ the same double activity may have been represented in the saga of the Calydonian Hunt. Whether or not this was so, for an appreciation of Asclepius' rôle in the heroic myth it is indispensable to take cognizance also of his medical performances, the more so since the reports on these achievements are by far the older ones and the better attested. As early as about 600 B. C. Asclepius is mentioned as the one who revived Capaneus, Lycurgus, and Hippolytus, and in the fifth century he is said to have healed Philoctetes and Heracles.⁶⁴ Asclepius' part in the heroic saga, then, is considerably more extensive than is generally supposed. The fact that he is not credited with many heroic deeds, or more correctly with none at all, only proves, therefore, that the saga was always consistent in viewing Asclepius not as a warrior or adventurer, but as a physician, who by his very nature was a man of peace rather than a fighter.

Under these circumstances, should one assume that Asclepius' medical task consisted in reviving and healing heroes? Such a contention would hold good only for that branch of the tradition which accepted as true the Homeric representation of Asclepius; for all that is told about the physician of heroes seems derived in the main from those data which the *Iliad* furnished in regard to Asclepius and the age in which he lived.⁶⁵

been a god; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 244, advocates that he was a human being. The value of these conclusions is not enhanced by their contradictory character.

⁶³ Cf. below, n. 72 (the healing of the Phinidae).

⁶⁴ Stesichorus mentioned Capaneus and Lycurgus (T. 69; 70); the *Naupactica* referred to Hippolytus (*ibid.*). According to Sophocles, Philoctetes was healed by Asclepius (T. 92). Since the poet makes Heracles recommend Asclepius to Philoctetes, it is most probable that he knew of Asclepius' treatment of Heracles which is attested by later sources (T. 87; 88); cf. below, n. 71. It should be emphasized that the authority of these reports, in part at least, is not inferior to that of all the other data known about Asclepius. The oldest statements (Stesichorus, *Naupactica*) go back to a few decades after the time in which the Hesiodic *Catalogue* was written and are contemporaneous with the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*, cf. above, n. 4; p. 21, n. 78. The usual contention (cf. e.g. Jacoby, *Fr.H.G.*, I, Kommentar, p. 519, 29) that the names of those revived by Asclepius are given by late tradition only, is therefore not correct.

⁶⁵ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227, n. 2, suggests that the names of the heroes revived by Asclepius are derived from speculations concerning the Hesiodic *Eoëe*, where

Capaneus and Lycurgus, whose revivals are the first to be attested, were characters of the Argive saga. With this province, however, Asclepius is not connected by any other early testimony; it is therefore unlikely that the revival of the two heroes was a genuine feature of the Argive tradition.⁶⁶ But Capaneus was one of the protagonists of the expedition against Thebes in which he was killed, and since the participants in this campaign were the fathers of the fighters before Troy, Asclepius' mention on the occasion of Capaneus' death is probably due to the circumstance that as the father of Machaon and Podalirius, who were soldiers in the Trojan War, he seemed a fitting partner in the Theban venture.⁶⁷ Lycurgus, too, was linked up with the enterprise against Thebes. Thus, he was a contemporary of Asclepius, the rescuer of Capaneus, whose sons were of one age with Achilles.⁶⁸ The same may be said of Hippolytus, Theseus' son, whom Asclepius restored to life. Other children of Theseus had joined the Asclepiads in the conquest of Troy.⁶⁹

What is true of the revivals of heroes brought about by Asclepius is equally valid with regard to his mythical healings. Heracles, who was supposed to have been treated by Asclepius (T. 87, 88),⁷⁰ was a famous contemporary of the Homeric Asclepius. Besides, like Asclepius, Heracles had also been one of the Argonauts. Finally, the report that Asclepius was called upon to heal Philoctetes (T. 92) obviously represents an

Asclepius was also said to have revived men, but where no names of these "patients" were mentioned, cf. below, n. 74. This may well have been the case. Nevertheless all these identifications may depend on the Homeric picture of Asclepius.

⁶⁶ For the Argive background of the two heroes, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie* II, pp. 914; 922; 935.

⁶⁷ The death of Capaneus is discussed also below, p. 47. The Theban enterprise was the greatest undertaking before the Trojan War, cf. Hesiod, *Opera*, 162 ff.

⁶⁸ For Lycurgus and the heroes who attacked Thebes, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 934 f.

⁶⁹ Hippolytus, too, was an Argive figure, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 738 ff.; but at an early date he was taken over by the Athenians and made a son of Theseus, cf. Preller-Robert, *ibid.*, pp. 741 ff., and even the Epidaurian god was said to have revived Hippolytus, the son of Theseus (T. 739, 4; cf. below, p. 74, n. 24). Granted that the reanimation of Hippolytus was also told in a Troezenian saga (cf. Preller-Robert, *ibid.*, p. 739), and that there, Hippolytus was not the son of Theseus—originally the story must have referred to Theseus' descendant. For the Thesidae in the Trojan War, cf. Preller-Robert, *ibid.*, p. 1286. Note that Hippolytus and Asclepius were brought together in the *Naupactica*, a poem that follows the Hesiodic pattern, cf. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 292. This fact confirms Wilamowitz' suggestion, referred to above, n. 65.

⁷⁰ The healing of Heracles, attested by Pausanias, was believed to have taken place in Laconia. The story, then, could be a Laconian invention. As such it would be relatively late, for in Laconia even the god Asclepius did not enjoy popularity in early times, cf. below, p. 241. On the other hand, Nicander (T. 89 ff.) already reports that Asclepius treated Iphicles when he was fighting the Hydra together with his brother, Heracles. This sounds as if Nicander had known of a relation between Heracles and Asclepius, which then in turn led to a connection between Iphicles and Asclepius, cf. also n. 71.

attempt in some way to associate Asclepius, the greatest doctor, with the Trojan War in which, according to Homer, he had no part. It seemed inconceivable that he should not have helped his countrymen in their dire plight. And thus he was made responsible for that medical achievement which decided the fate of Troy.⁷¹

Doubtless, the heroic saga gradually and systematically extended the reach of Asclepius' practice among his fellow heroes. The Asclepius of whom Homer spoke turned into the famous healer of wounded fighters, the reviver of those who had died in battle. Just as his children took care of their contemporaries, so he was believed to have treated the heroes of his own time and generation.⁷² But Asclepius, the father of Machaon and Podalirius, was a figure invented by Homer; there must have been another notion of a physician Asclepius who was not related to these two medical men of the Trojan War.⁷³ All the stories concerning the

⁷¹ Concerning the healing of Philoctetes, its importance and its original connection with the sons of Asclepius, cf. above, p. 13. T. 92 is in seeming contradiction with another passage of the same play (T. 152), where Sophocles says that the Asclepiads will heal Philoctetes. The difficulty has been resolved by R. C. Jebb, Sophocles, *The Plays and Fragments*, IV, 1890, *The Philoctetes*, ad 1437. In T. 152, Neoptolemus, the mortal, is speaking who cannot foresee the intervention of Heracles, the god (T. 92). Jebb assumes that Sophocles thinks "of Asclepius as a god, whom Heracles is to send from heaven." It is probable that Sophocles here wants to pay his respect to the god whose devotee he was, cf. below, p. 117. But this does not necessarily imply that in his opinion the divine Asclepius will take care of Philoctetes. Moreover, the connection between Asclepius and Philoctetes may be older than the Sophoclean play and may have originated in a time in which Asclepius was not yet considered a god. Heracles may well promise to procure the aid of the great physician whose merits he knows from his own experiences on this earth.

⁷² In the text I have dealt only with the oldest and most important testimonies concerning Asclepius' reviving and healing of heroes. The later statements, in part, support the interpretation given, or at least they do not contradict it. T. 69 and 70 name as those whom Asclepius called back to life also Tyndareus (Panyassis), Glaucus (Amelesagoras), Orion (Telesarchus), Hymenaeus (Orphics). Tyndareus, according to the Cyclic Epic, was the father of Helen, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 331; 1066. Glaucus, the son of Minos, was a contemporary of Theseus, but his revival is usually attributed to Polyides, cf. Preller-Robert, II, pp. 199-201; later, it was apparently ascribed to Asclepius, the most famous physician. Propertius even claims that Androgeon, another son of Minos, was restored by Asclepius (T. 86); but this, it seems, is simply a mistake. For the Androgeon saga, cf. Preller-Robert, II, p. 689. Orion and Hymenaeus, mentioned in Hellenistic times, are gods rather than men (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 199, n. 2; Preller-Robert, I, pp. 448 ff.), and their connection with Asclepius seems the mere play of poetic fancy—it was never generally accepted; but cf. also below, n. 87. As for patients whom Asclepius cured of grave diseases, only two more are mentioned: the sons of Phineus and the daughters of Proetus (T. 69; 71). The story of the Phinidae is of Thessalian origin, and Asclepius gets involved in it as a participant in the Argonautic Voyage, cf. Preller-Robert, II, pp. 810 ff.; 815; Jacoby, *Fr. G. H.*, II, Kommentar, p. 136, 44, who assumes also Athenian influence on the version of Phylarchus. The healing of the Proetidae, on the other hand, is usually attributed to Melampus, cf. Preller-Robert, II, p. 251. Again, a famous case is transferred to Asclepius, the famous physician. For the significance of these healings, cf. also below, p. 48.

⁷³ No children of Asclepius appear in the *Eoee*, cf. below, p. 54.

heroic clientele of Asclepius unquestionably are of a relatively late date and hardly reveal the original meaning of the legend. In the world of true heroes, Asclepius, the physician, seems to be a stranger, or at best a denizen. Is it possible that once he had been viewed as the healer and helper of common people?

Indeed, Asclepius' accomplishments were usually summed up in the statement that "he healed the sick and revived the dead" (T. 56).⁷⁴ He was educated, Pindar says, to give medical help to men (T. 1, *vv.* 45 f.). In these instances no names of patients are listed, no cures are described, no revivings are recounted. Nor does it become apparent where Asclepius followed his profession. To be sure, in late centuries an attempt was made by some to localize his practice in Delphi (T. 98).⁷⁵ But on the whole, the saga is as vague in regard to the place where Asclepius practiced, as it is in regard to other details of his life. The general assertion that he was able to heal and to revive is all that the myth avers.

The medical procedure of Asclepius, a healer of mortal men, was thought to have been no different from that of any human physician. True, while, according to Homer, Asclepius was in possession of certain drugs which apparently had an extraordinary efficacy (T. 164, *vv.* 218 f.), the common legend was not entirely satisfied with Asclepius' having only simple, though potent, remedies at his disposal. He was believed to own a share in the blood of the Gorgon which he received from Athena and which he used to heal or to destroy at will (T. 3).⁷⁶ But

⁷⁴ T. 56 is taken from Xenophon; the same phrasing, however, occurs over and over again, cf. *e.g.* T. 3, and it can safely be attributed already to the Hesiodic poem, for it is in agreement with the tenor of the whole story; this is also the assumption of Wilamowitz, cf. above, n. 65. Pindar, in his description of Asclepius' cures (T. 1, *vv.* 47 f.), likewise does not mention any names of patients.

⁷⁵ The source is a Nicander Scholion (T. 98). Yet, even Pherecydes spoke of Asclepius' death in Delphi (T. 71). This is a unique version of the saga, cf. below, n. 95; it may be connected with the worship of Asclepius Archegetes, cf. below, pp. 96 f. Incidentally, Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 248, suggests that the localization of Asclepius' healing in Delphi "may have arisen from the identification of the Delphians with the Hyperboreans and from the story that the life of the latter people was miraculously prolonged."

⁷⁶ Thraemer, following O. Müller, suggests that the Gorgon-Asclepius saga was Argive, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1654, 32 ff. Gruppe, *Griech. Mythologie*, p. 1452, n. 2., proposes an Arcadian origin, because in Tegea, Athena and Asclepius were worshipped together. That the myth was told also in Arcadia is not impossible, but an Argive origin of the fable is more probable since it is above all Argive heroes whom Asclepius is said to have revived (cf. above, p. 41) and since the Gorgon was represented in the main temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus (T. 739, 2). At any rate, it is hardly permissible to explain the passage in Apollodorus as an "unorganisches Einschleissel," as Wilamowitz does (*Isyllos*, p. 63, n. 35), though the story is certainly late like all other Argive tales. It seems that the Gorgon, who is terrifying and at the same time beautiful (cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 192), symbolizes the ambiguous character of the

such occasional contentions are refuted by the ever-repeated claim that Asclepius' success was simply due to his knowledge of the healing art. Through his noble education, through his excellent training he had become a physician of consummate skill (T. 5).⁷⁷ Pindar, who most exactly describes Asclepius' medical procedures, says (T. 1, vv. 47 ff.): "And those whosoever came suffering from the sores of nature, or with their limbs wounded either by gray bronze or by far-hurled stone, or with bodies wasting away with summer's heat or winter's cold, he loosed and delivered divers of them from diverse pains, tending some of them with kindly incantations, giving to others a soothing potion, or, haply, swathing their limbs with simples, or restoring others by the knife."⁷⁸ There is nothing mysterious about Asclepius' treatment, he healed with the means which every physician had at his command. Nor do Asclepius' motives for practicing medicine seem at variance with those of ordinary human physicians. Pindar intimates that in treating his patients Asclepius was seduced by love of gain (T. 1, vv. 54 ff.). The tragedians make the same charge (T. 99).⁷⁹ Plato cannot believe that Asclepius, the son of a god, should have been given to unlawful lust for gold; if he really was avaricious, the philosopher says, he could not have been of divine origin (T. 99). But neither Pindar, nor Plato seem to object to the fact that Asclepius should have accepted money, as long

φάρμακον, its healing and destructive power, which was so clearly realized in antiquity, cf. W. Artelt, *Studien z. Geschichte d. Medizin*, XXIII, 1937, pp. 38 ff. Apollodorus' version of the Gorgon story (T. 3) must therefore be considered more correct than that of Tatian (T. 3a), contrary to Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.* Ovid's claim that Asclepius came into possession of the miraculous drugs of Glaucus (T. 75) constitutes another turn of the tradition toward the supernatural. Cf. also Nicander's story about the herb Panacea (T. 89). Such reports probably are transformations of Homer's data concerning Chiron's gift to Asclepius.

⁷⁷ For the explanation of Asclepius' reviving of the dead, cf. below, p. 45.

⁷⁸ That the kindly incantations which Pindar mentions were not miraculous words, but rather songs and music, I have tried to show, *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, V, 1937, p. 224; p. 235, n. 102. However, even if μαλακαὶ ἐπαοιδαὶ were understood as incantations in the usual sense of the word, they would still be nothing divine, but rather a human method of treatment.

⁷⁹ Who these poets are, whom Plato mentions, is unknown. Certainly he does not refer to Aeschylus or Euripides, as is usually suggested in the commentaries on the *Republic*; for in these writers, Asclepius' death is not motivated in this way, cf. below, p. 46 and n. 84. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 60 ff., considers the whole story a Pindaric invention, and it is undoubtedly conceived in the spirit of Pindar whose contempt for the φιλοκερδής is well illustrated in *Isthmiae*, II. O. Schroeder, *Pindars Pythien*, 1922, p. 30, opposes the opinion of Wilamowitz with reference to T. 100, which according to him gives a similar tradition and is independent of Pindar; cf. however below, n. 86. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 142, n. 7, rightly suggests that the story told by Pindar, whoever may have invented it, was meant as censure of medicine as it was practiced by human doctors. That they often cared more for their fees than for their patients, that their aim was nothing other than gain, is admitted even in the medical literature of the 5th and 4th centuries; cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, pp. 89 ff.; 103.

as he did so in a proper way. As a doctor he was entitled to receive a remuneration for his services. Wandering around from one place to another, and offering his help to those who were in need of it (T. 126), he practiced medicine like all his fellow craftsmen in order to make a living (T. 104).

While in the pursuit of his medical profession Asclepius apparently was not unlike other ordinary physicians, he differed from them in one respect: he was more successful than they were: he possessed the skill to raise from the dead (T. 66). Through his craftsmanship he was able to revive those who had died (T. 121; 75, *v.* 748; 97; 109), through his wisdom he succeeded in saving those who were already the lawful prey of Hades (T. 1, *vv.* 55-6).⁸⁰ To be rescued from death was the highest expectation, the greatest hope which the ancients cherished in regard to medicine. Its fulfillment was held to be the most adroit feat of the physician. Some human doctors pretended, or were reputed, to have achieved this task.⁸¹ But for the average physician, it remained a goal that was inaccessible to him; in vain, he aspired to reach it. The son of Apollo the god of medicine, the pupil of Chiron the wise Centaur, however, attained that perfection of which the others fell short through the inadequacy of their art.⁸²

Yet, although the achievements of Asclepius were incomparable, he still remained a physician. He was no equal of the other heroes with whom some of the poets brought him into contact. A craftsman, a medical practitioner, doing his daily work and earning a livelihood, was not on the same footing with those aristocrats whose lives consisted in warfare and hunting. He was nearer to the life of the common people,

⁸⁰ Note that Asclepius, unlike Heracles, Orpheus, or Dionysus, does not save from death by a *κατάβασις εἰς Ἅιδου* (for such descents into the nether world, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Katabasis, X, pp. 2397; 2398; 2400), but rather through his medical art.

⁸¹ Leaving aside the deeds of magicians and miracle workers (cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 171 ff.), Empedocles was believed to have revived the dead; cf. Diogenes Laertius, VIII, 67, and below, n. 82. The same was told about Asclepiades, cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXVI, 15. Plato, *Charm.*, 156 D, speaks of τῶν Ζαλμύειδος ἰατρῶν, οἱ λέγονται καὶ ἀποθανάρχειν. Moreover, the successful physician was commonly viewed as the savior from death which was threatening his patients. Thus Herodotus, III, 130, says of Democedes of Croton that he gave back life to the dying: *ὅς τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπέδωκε*. Cf. also Callimachus, *Hymnus in Apollinem*, 46: *ἱητροὶ δεδάσσι ἀνάβλησιν θανάτοιο*, or Eunapius, *Vitae philosophorum* [Oribasius], 499: *προσεκυνεῖτο καθάπερ τις θεός, τοὺς μὲν ἐκ νοσημάτων χρονίων ἀνασώζων, τοὺς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ θανάτου πύλης διακλέπτων*; cf. also T. 468. It is against the background of such testimonies that the reports concerning Asclepius must be considered.

⁸² Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 738, n. 17, has seen that this is the meaning of the revivals ascribed to Asclepius, and he rightly compares Empedocles, *Fr.* 111 [Diels-Kranz]: *ἄξει δ' ἐξ αἰδᾶο καταφθιμένου μένος ἀνδρός*, words which picture the achievements of him who possesses perfect knowledge. Cf. also T. 227.

closer to men; indeed, he was one of them. In the legend, as it was current throughout the centuries, the Homeric Asclepius, the king and peer of princes, had taken off his fancy costume. The pretender appeared in his simple and natural dress of old.

That it was Asclepius, the craftsman, the physician of men, who was the subject of the old myth, is finally confirmed by what was told about his death. All versions of the saga unanimously relate that Zeus killed Asclepius because he restored the dead to life. Asclepius, then, suffered death on account of his deeds as a physician, and modern interpreters usually explain his destruction as a divine judgment visited upon a sinner against the eternal rules of the cosmos. Asclepius, they say, in reviving the dead, in making men immortal, transgressed the limits set for mankind, he infringed upon the rights which death has over mortals. Zeus, the lord of men and the preserver of the laws of nature, could not but punish him because he had violated the order of the universe.⁸³ Such a moralistic interpretation, to be sure, agrees with the view found in some of the ancient sources. The story went that Hades complained to Zeus that as a consequence of Asclepius' activity his power was diminishing; the dead, he charged, were continually growing fewer. Whereupon Zeus, enraged at Asclepius and in defence of Hades' rights, struck the perpetrator with his thunderbolt (T. 4; cf. also T. 75, vv. 757 ff.). This tale, although it is known only from Diodorus and Ovid, must have been current even in the fifth century B. C., for it fits the temper of that period and the same reasoning seems to be presupposed by Aeschylus (T. 66).⁸⁴ But does it give that motivation for Asclepius' death which was proposed in the oldest version of the saga?

⁸³ Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 70-1, says: "Ein helfender Arzt, vielen zum Segen, die siech waren von Wunden und Krankheit. Aber seine Kunst verführte ihn, die Schranken der Menschheit zu durchbrechen, er erweckte Gestorbene. Dafür zerschmetterte ihn Zeus mit dem Donnerkeil, und dem Tode verfiel, der des Todes Rechte gekürzt hatte." Cf. also *Glaube*, II, p. 227. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 235a, remarks: "It is interesting to note here [in regard to Asclepius whom Zeus killed "for the sin of raising the dead to life"] the germ of a higher thought, worthy of the Hellenic scientific spirit, that the divine powers are concerned with the maintenance of the normal order rather than with miracles." The earlier assumption that Asclepius was actually killed by a stroke of lightning and that the saga echoes this event (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1654, 8 ff.) is now generally discarded, and that with good reason. Such a contention is beyond reasonable proof.

⁸⁴ Aeschylus' words, in their brevity, are somewhat obscure; besides, there are textual difficulties. With Smyth and others I read: οὐδὲ τὸν ὀρθοδαῖ / τῶν φθιμένων ἀνάγειν Ζεὺς ἀπέπανσεν (Hartung αὐτ' ἔπανσ' MSS) ἐπ' εὐλαβείᾳ. N reads ἐπ' ἀβλαβείᾳ, F reads ἐπ' αὐλαβείᾳ, the latter probably being a mere misspelling of ἐπ' ἀβλαβείᾳ in accordance with the identical value of αὐ and ἀβ in Byzantine pronunciation, cf. G. Thómsen, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*, II, 1938, p. 108. If ἐπ' ἀβλαβείᾳ is accepted, the meaning of the words would be that Zeus killed Asclepius in order "to prevent his arrangements being

Around 600 B. C., at any rate, when Asclepius was believed to have suffered destruction not because he had raised men, but because he had restored certain heroes to life, death came upon him on account of his opposition to the gods rather than to the laws of nature. For Capaneus, according to the ancient saga, was a great evil-doer, and it was Zeus who killed him when he attempted to storm Thebes.⁸⁵ If Asclepius revived the victim of divine judgment and was himself destroyed afterwards, he hardly perished because he had violated the order of the universe. His crime rather lay in that he helped those whom the gods had punished; this offence and no other drew the wrath of Zeus upon him. The same is true of the reviving of Hippolytus. He had met death at the hands of Aphrodite; as a favor to Artemis, Asclepius restored him to life (T. 77; 79).⁸⁶ Yet, she who had killed Hippolytus was a goddess, too. Asclepius had no right to revoke the divine decree, to act "against the will of Dis" (T. 76). Naturally, Zeus was indignant; he annihilated the mortal who meddled with the affairs of the gods.⁸⁷

thwarted—or *ἐπ' εὐλαβείᾳ* as a precautionary measure to that end"; cf. W. Headlam, *Agamemnon*, 1910, p. 233. In both cases the intent of the statement is the same, but in the whole context *ἐπ' εὐλαβείᾳ* seems to me more probable. Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 397 f., claims that according to Aeschylus, Zeus forbade Asclepius to revive men, yet did not kill him. This seems to be a misinterpretation of the passage in question. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227, on the other hand, gives the impression that not only Aeschylus but also Euripides and Pindar adopted the moralistic version of the saga. Yet the former (T. 67; 107) simply states the fact of Asclepius' death and does not dwell on Zeus' motives. According to Pindar (T. 1, *vv.* 54 ff.), Asclepius was killed because he was too greedy (Wilamowitz' assertion: "Pindar Pyth. 3, der die Eöe nacherzählt . . ." is a *lapsus calami*).

⁸⁵ For Capaneus, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 937. Nothing is known about Lycurgus whose revival Stesichorus mentions together with that of Capaneus, cf. above, n. 64. His participation in the Theban expedition is attested only by this writer, cf. Preller-Robert, *ibid.*, p. 914.

⁸⁶ In the interpretation of the Hippolytus healing I follow in part the report of Ovid (T. 75). It is Phaedra, on whose account Hippolytus dies, but Aphrodite is responsible for Phaedra's falling in love with the son of Theseus; for she has kindled this passion so as to take vengeance on Hippolytus (cf. also Euripides, *Hippolytus*). The claim of the Pindar Scholion (T. 100) that in the case of Hippolytus, too, Asclepius was enticed by gold, sounds like a reinterpretation of the old myth in the Pindaric spirit (contrary to Schroeder, cf. above, n. 79). Incidentally, Ovid's poem proves that the Hippolytus whom Asclepius revived was believed to have been the son of Theseus, cf. above, p. 41. For the identity of Hippolytus with Virbius whom Ovid mentions, cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v. Virbius, VI, esp. p. 330.

⁸⁷ Ovid, who in many respects takes up the old tradition (*e. g.* his report on the raven, above, n. 26), has neatly expressed Asclepius' position (T. 2, *vv.* 642 ff.): it was his privilege to revive men, but when he interfered with the wishes of the gods, he met death. Of other figures whom, according to late evidence (cf. above, n. 72), Asclepius restored to life, Orion fits into the same scheme: he had been destroyed by Artemis, cf. *Odyssey*, V, 121 ff. Glaucus originally was not a patient of Asclepius; the revival of the god Hymenaeus is an isolated case. Concerning the death of Tyndareus no details are known. All these names may have replaced older ones without regard for the meaning of the earlier attributions.

The same reasoning is reflected even in those testimonies which connect the death of Asclepius with certain healings which he supposedly had performed. In these cases Asclepius certainly was not violating any human or divine laws, he was doing only what was his duty as a physician. But his choice of patients again was rather incautious. He healed the daughters of Proetus who had been maddened through the wrath of Hera (T. 69).⁸⁸ Certainly, it is the thwarting of the divine will which here brings about Asclepius' death. His destruction is not the punishment of a sinner, it is the annihilation of one who has trespassed against the personal wishes of the gods.⁸⁹

In a similar vein Asclepius' death is explained by some authors who believe that he died because he had restored his human patients to life, and not only one but many of them. He was wont to raise the dead, Euripides avers (T. 67). He was killed because Zeus was afraid lest men, no longer liable to death, would become too mighty and therefore would come to the rescue of each other (T. 3).⁹⁰ It is, then, fear for himself which determines the action of the supreme god, anxiety for his own might and that of the other deities, hatred against men who shall not become the equals of their celestial masters. To put it differently: the attitude of the lord of the world toward Asclepius is the same which he takes toward Prometheus. Both he hates, and apparently for the same reason: they take sides with the mortals; they help men; they try to better the lot of the human race. That is what Zeus resents. But whereas he is unable to destroy the divine Prometheus and must be satisfied with tormenting him, he can annihilate the hero Asclepius, and he has no qualms in doing so. To be sure, he would not have troubled to interfere, had Asclepius revived just one or two individuals. Yet he who makes it a practice to raise the dead sets Zeus trembling. The reign of the gods is

⁸⁸ This healing usually is attributed to Melampus, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 246 ff.; it is ascribed to Asclepius only once, and that by a late authority, cf. *ibid.*, p. 251, n. 4, and above, n. 72. But the testimony in which the motive of divine wrath is especially evident is in keeping with older tradition and not a later rationalization, as Jacoby, *Fr. G. H.*, I, Kommentar, p. 519, 27, suggests. Divine wrath is hardly a category characteristic of Greek enlightenment. Nor can the healing of madness be called a miraculous cure, contrary to Jacoby, *ibid.*; it is nothing uncommon in Greek medicine.

⁸⁹ Of all the other healings ascribed to Asclepius, only that of the sons of Phineus is supposed by Phylarchus to have led to his death (T. 69; cf. above, n. 72). Sophocles (T. 421a), however, saw in it a well-deserving deed of Asclepius (cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 819) and apparently did not hold it the reason for Asclepius' destruction. Did Phylarchus identify the sons of Phineus with Phineus himself who was blinded by Helios in punishment for his misdeeds (cf. Preller-Robert, *ibid.*, p. 811-812)?

⁹⁰ T. 3 is taken from Apollodorus the mythographer. Cf. also T. 121. Even Ovid who mentions Hades' complaints to Zeus (cf. above, p. 46) characterizes Zeus as fearing the example set by Asclepius (T. 75, v. 759).

imperiled; action is necessary in order to preserve their power. Envious of the overskillful craftsman, Zeus kills the healer of the sick and the reviver of the dead (T. 233; 102).⁹¹ As for Asclepius, however, his death is the final proof of the greatness of his achievements. He had reached the goal, he had become all-powerful in his craftsmanship. Like others whose art attained perfection, he was on that account destroyed by the gods.⁹²

There is hardly any doubt that this version of the saga echoes the explanation for Asclepius' fate, as it was given in the Hesiodic poem and in the original pre-Delphic myth. For it is in agreement with those ancient Greek beliefs in regard to the nature of the deity and the destiny of men which are characteristic of the old legend in general.⁹³ All other stories that were told must be considered attempts at reconciling the objectionable content of the original fable with the changing ideas of later generations. In the course of this process, Asclepius' death at first was justified by his opposing the will of the gods in a specific case in which death had been decreed by Zeus, or disease inflicted by divine wrath; later, the raising of the dead was viewed as a violation of the cosmic laws which Zeus was bound to defend.⁹⁴ But in the beginning,

⁹¹ K. Ph. Moritz, *Götterlehre*, 1795, p. 251, is the first to have drawn a comparison between Asclepius and Prometheus. Another casual reference to the relationship between the Asclepius saga and the Prometheus myth is to be found in Dyer, *Greek Gods*, p. 239, and Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 142, n. 7. But even these scholars do not fully appreciate the importance of the parallel which seems to have escaped the notice of all other interpreters. The resemblance of the motives attributed by the two tales to the main actors is close indeed. Prometheus makes men independent of the gods so that they may help each other; the same is said of Asclepius (T. 3). Zeus is envious of Prometheus as he is of Asclepius (T. 233). For the Prometheus saga, cf. K. Lehrs, *Vorstellung der Griechen über den Neid der Götter und die Ueberhebung*, *Populäre Aufsätze*, 1875, pp. 35 ff.

⁹² Cf. Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 738: "Nicht minder wird Asklepios verherrlicht durch den Blitz des Zeus . . . der ihn tötet. Dies bedeuten die vielen Mythen seit dem Dichter der Naupaktika . . . von durch ihn auf erweckten Todten. . . . Wie die Blendung des Sängers Thamyris durch die Musen die Bedeutung hat dass er den Gipfel seiner Kunst einnahm, so ist auch das Leiden des Asklepios nur aus der Vorstellung entsprungen dass die Kunst des Heros ins Überheroische gegangen sei." For the Thamyris story, cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, pp. 413 ff.

⁹³ In this connection it is important to remember that Apollodorus (T. 3) who in many details follows the Hesiodic poem (cf. above, n. 23), ascribes Asclepius' destruction to the fear of Zeus. Note also Pindar's effort to make Asclepius appear guilty by insinuating that he was seduced by love of gain. Although this motive is meant to satirize the avarice of physicians (cf. above, n. 79), it is also needed in order to justify Zeus' action which, to Pindar, otherwise would remain unexplainable.

⁹⁴ Still later, Asclepius' death through a thunderbolt was taken to mean that he was consumed by a fiery disease (T. 115); an explanation in the truly euhemeristic spirit; or his being killed by a stroke of lightning was understood as the symbol of his heroization or deification (T. 236). Rohde, *Psyche*, I, pp. 320 ff., believes this to be the correct interpretation of the myth and claims that such stories are much older than is generally assumed. Cf. however below, pp. 50 f.; 75.

Asclepius was thought to have suffered destruction in return for his benevolence toward mankind; his fate was the inevitable outcome of his Promethean endeavor, it was the climax of his life, the last act of the drama.

That the saga saw Asclepius' death in this light follows also from the fact that the heroic myth is not at all concerned with the fate of Asclepius, once Zeus had destroyed him. Just as the locality where his death took place is not identified,⁹⁵ so his grave is never mentioned. Although usually the tomb of a hero was a sacred place, where he was believed to continue his existence and where he could still be found by men who wanted his help, it was apparently of no consequence where Asclepius was buried. True, in later centuries a few regions claimed to be in possession of the grave of an Asclepius: a spot near the river Lusius in Arcadia (T. 118), Cynosura (T. 101; 116), and Epidaurus (T. 119 f.).⁹⁶ But the Asclepius who supposedly was entombed in these places was not the character of the heroic saga whose mother, Coronis, was killed by Apollo and who himself was slain by Zeus. It was not the Asclepius whom the Hesiodic poem celebrated. At the river Lusius or in Cynosura it was the "second" Asclepius, the son of Arsippus and Arsinoë, who was buried there, and in Epidaurus, if the late testimony can be trusted at all, the god Asclepius had his sepulchre.⁹⁷ The hero Asclepius, however, the helper of men, the healer of the sick, the raiser of the dead, was nowhere to be found on this earth.⁹⁸

Nor did he ascend to heaven or live on in the firmament, visible to

⁹⁵ Pherecydes is the only one to assert that Asclepius died in Delphi (T. 71), cf. above, n. 75. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 64, n. 38, believes that Hesiod made the same claim. Yet, had this been the case, it would be hard to understand why all the other versions which go back to the Hesiodic poem, without exception, leave the place of Asclepius' death undetermined; for Pherecydes, cf. also below, p. 97, n. 21. Firmicus (T. 114), in reviewing the places where gods and heroes died and were buried, says of Asclepius: "He was destroyed somewhere else." Besides, had Hesiod spoken of Asclepius' death in Delphi, one would certainly expect to find a Delphic tomb of Asclepius attested by the tradition.

⁹⁶ Cf. in general, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1654, 47 ff.; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 239. The river Lusius and Cynosura are mentioned by Cicero, Clement, Ampelius and Lydus. They are dependent on the so-called "sondernden Theologen" (around 100 B. C., cf. Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. *Mythographie*, XVI, p. 1371, 21 ff.), who, in turn, seem to have borrowed from the Peripatetic *Peplos*; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, and Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 420. Epidaurus occurs in Ps. Clementine treatises whose source is not known, but which may also have used the tradition of the "sondernden Theologen." Cynosura, according to the ancient interpreters, lies in Lacedaemon; S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte*, 1893, pp. 196 f., seems to have proved that Cynosura in Arcadia must have been meant.

⁹⁷ Concerning the various Asclepius figures, cf. also below, p. 93. For the possible explanation of the reports regarding Asclepius' tombs, especially that in Epidaurus, cf. below, p. 191, n. 2. Note that for Tricca no grave of Asclepius is attested.

⁹⁸ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 12. For the significance of this fact in regard to the later history of Asclepius' worship, cf. below, p. 93.

men for all eternity, as did so many other heroes. To be sure, Eratosthenes asserts that Asclepius, the son of Apollo and Coronis, he whom Zeus killed with his thunderbolt, eventually became a star (T. 704a).⁹⁹ Yet, such a dénouement of the saga cannot have formed part of the Coronis poem, still less of the myth which was taken up by Hesiod. For in the star saga Asclepius was identified with Ophiuchus. This presupposes that the serpent was the servant and symbol of Asclepius; only after their association had been firmly established could Ophiuchus be taken for Asclepius. In the old heroic myth, however, no mention was made of the serpent at all.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in the star saga Apollo intercedes with Zeus on behalf of his son Asclepius, and the king of gods, at the instigation of Apollo and as a favor to him, transports Asclepius to the stars. He takes pity on him whom he had first destroyed (T. 121; 121a-b). Neither Zeus' action, nor that of Apollo, as they are represented here, is in line with the Hesiodic poem. Their characters are changed completely; the relation between Apollo and Zeus is altered; the enemies have become friends. Such a reversal of the main features of the story being the indispensable presupposition of Asclepius' translation to the stars, his elevation to heaven must be the invention of a later period.¹⁰¹ According to the original myth, Asclepius in dying as he

⁹⁹ F. Boll and W. Gundel, Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Sternbilder, VI, p. 921, 66, have stressed the fact that in T. 704a Eratosthenes himself is quoted as authority. The other testimonies for the star legend are Ps. Eratosthenes, *Catasterismi* (T. 121) and Servius (T. 122). T. 121a is taken from Hyginus who himself seems dependent on Eratosthenes, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XVI, p. 1369, 31 f. T. 121b comes from the commentary on the *Aratea* of Caesar Germanicus, who wrote under Augustus or Tiberius. Cf. also T. 704.

¹⁰⁰ The healing of Glaucus, through which the hero Asclepius acquired the serpent as his servant, is attested only in the fifth century B. C. (Amelesagoras, T. 70, cf. above, n. 72). During the same period the serpent became generally known as the symbol of the god Asclepius, cf. below, pp. 229 ff. It is therefore likely that the connection between the hero Asclepius and the serpent is a reflection of the divine worship. At any rate, the Glaucus story has no original relation with Asclepius, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1654, 27 ff.

¹⁰¹ At what time it became customary in Greece to place heroes among the stars, it is impossible to say with certainty. The earliest star saga is that of Perseus, and even this can at best be traced to Sophocles; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 261; Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 239. In the fifth century there seems to have been a general belief in "translations of heroes to the stars," cf. F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, 1912, p. 175. At that time one may also have begun to consider Asclepius a star. Though Eratosthenes is the oldest authority for such a claim, his sources go back to the fifth century B. C. (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XIV, p. 1369, 31 f.). On the other hand, Aratus, in describing Ophiuchus, does not mention Asclepius; in his time, that is a few decades before Eratosthenes, the star legend can hardly have been commonly accepted or even commonly known. A Hellenistic origin of the story, therefore, is not entirely to be excluded, the less so since in the Hellenistic period star sagas were the favorites of mythological fancy (cf. F. Boll-G. Bezold, *Stern Glaube u. Stern-Deutung*, 1926, p. 53). In late centuries the legend of the Asclepius star was very popular

did had fulfilled his destiny, "he was dead and done with."¹⁰²

Now that the data concerning Asclepius' origin, his life and deeds, his death have been analyzed in detail, it should be possible to form an opinion about the character of the original legend and thus to grasp the meaning of the Asclepius figure. Invented long before the time in which it was put into verse by the poet of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, the story underwent the usual transformations; it was adapted to the purposes and ambitions of various sections of Greece; religious developments left their imprint upon it; changes were made in accordance with new ideals. Yet the gist of the ancient fable which made Asclepius, Chiron's friend, the son of a god, is still discernible through all later distortions; it is roughly this:

Coronis, the daughter of Phlegyas who was famous for his violence and daring, became the love of Apollo. When she gave her hand to the man whom her father had chosen for her, the god heard about this through the raven, his messenger. Apollo's anger was roused against Coronis and she died at his command. But the divine physician snatched his child from the dying mother's womb, thus saving it from death which threatened it even before it was born. The god himself then entrusted Asclepius to the care of Chiron, and the Centaur educated Asclepius and taught him medicine. As the son of Apollo, the physician, as the pupil of Chiron, the medical hero, Asclepius himself grew to be a great doctor. He chose to live the simple life of a craftsman, not that of a hero, engaged in daring ventures. The enemies whom he, as a friend of men, conquered with indomitable spirit were disease and death. For he knew his art to perfection. Nay, such was his wisdom that he not only healed the sick and prevented them from dying, he also restored those who had perished. He who himself saw the light of the world through the saving hand of his divine father was to save all mankind from the most dreaded darkness of Hades. He achieved the greatest triumph which the medical art can gain and bestowed upon mortal beings the greatest boon which can be granted to them: eternal existence. But Zeus feared that men, no longer subject to death, would unseat the Olympians. He could not let it come to pass that the barriers which separate mortals from immortals be laid low. The king of gods, in defence of the divine prerogatives, put a stop to Asclepius. Like Prometheus, Asclepius fell victim to the jealousy of the supreme deity.

and it was known even during the Middle Ages (cf. A. Warburg, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II, 1938-39, p. 289). For the importance of the star Asclepius in astrology, cf. Boll-Gundel, *op. cit.*, p. 922, 44 ff.

¹⁰² Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227: "Damit ist er tot und abgetan."

Such a story, told in a grave and melancholy mood, obviously is symbolic of bold heroes and hateful gods, of human endeavor against the unsurmountable boundaries of fate, of a conflict which cannot be avoided or solved. More specifically, it is the tale of the physician, of his chances and his limitations, a simile of eternal truth. That explains why the facts recounted are left in the vagueness and uncertainty of the "once upon a time" instead of being placed within the realistic setting of the "here and now." To be sure, Asclepius' birth and death are described with exactness, but only as far as they are of symbolic significance. Moreover, what takes place between the beginning and the end of his life remains a blank, except for the assertion that he was a medical man. No love affairs are attached to him, no tales of friendship or hatred, no accounts of rivalry or quarrel with men or gods. In this regard, Asclepius is one of the least humanized of the Greek heroes. All mythological figures of the Greeks, at least those who are of some importance in the heroic myth, have taken on a definite appearance; their actions are known in minute detail, their characters are clearly visualized and not to be confounded one with another. It would be hard indeed to mistake Achilles for Odysseus, Agamemnon for Menelaus, or even Machaon for Podalirius. Asclepius, however, has no such sharply delineated individuality, nor has he a distinct life story in which his personality could unfold. He is a shadowy inhabitant of this earth. All his being is integrated into one function, that of healing and helping mankind. His story is neither historical nor hieratic, it is the expression of an idea, a compelling inspiration or a warning example. Asclepius himself is the embodiment of the ideal ancient physician.

3. ASCLEPIUS THE HERO OF PHYSICIANS

The legend of Asclepius is that of a culture hero. It celebrates the achievements of the artist and his art.¹ Stories of this type, in Greek mythology, are very common. Again and again the life and death of great craftsmen were recounted, their contributions to human knowledge were praised. In all sections of Greece such tales were current; people apparently took delight in them.² But why did Hesiod put the story

¹ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 243-4, seems the only scholar to have characterized the Asclepius saga in such a way. It is fair, however, to add that Welcker's interpretation of the myth (cf. above, p. 45, n. 82; p. 49, n. 92) presupposes an opinion similar to that which is here expressed.

² Such sagas concerning poets, craftsmen and the like, important and interesting as they are, so far have not received much attention in the literature on ancient mythology. Some data have been collected by L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*³, II, 1875, pp. 470 ff.; cf. also Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v. Heros, I, 2, p. 2486.

into verse? Why did it become part of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*? All the poems included in that collection serve the purpose of establishing the genealogies of noble families, of connecting mortal beings with a divine or semidivine ancestor.³ Asclepius, too, therefore, should have been dealt with by Hesiod as the father of famous offspring. Yet, no children of his are mentioned here. The preserved fragments, at any rate, do not speak of the descendants of Asclepius, and scholars have always agreed that this is so not because of the chance of tradition: the myth of Coronis and of the physician Asclepius was hardly the proper genealogy of a proud family.⁴ Why, then, is the story to be found in a collection of genealogies?

That this is due to fortuitous circumstances is the less likely since there were sons of Asclepius who certainly had an interest in the history of their father. To be sure, they were not related to him by blood but were his children only in a spiritual sense; just the same, they were called his children. From early times physicians were known under the name of "Asclepiads," sons of Asclepius. The term was used generically and applied to those who by no means maintained that they were real descendants of Asclepius. As the hero-father of physicians, Asclepius naturally must have had a legend which told who he was and what he had accomplished. And while the story recounted by Hesiod may contain features which would not suit the aspirations of an aristocratic family, it could hardly infringe upon the feelings of those who were Asclepius' children only in so far as they followed his calling. His boldness, his Promethean endeavor was in line with their own ideals; his suffering, in their eyes, could only be merit and distinction. I suggest, then, that it was Hesiod's intention to celebrate Asclepius as the father of physicians; that the genealogical claims made in the *Catalogue* concerned not Asclepius' sons in the flesh and their offspring, but all those who, like their ancestor, undertook to lighten human suffering; that the culture hero, in an appropriate manner indeed, was extolled as the progenitor of all his fellow craftsmen.

As far as chronological arguments are concerned, this hypothesis seems quite justifiable. The name "Asclepiads" is attested for the first time in one of the elegies of Theognis (T. 219). It is uncertain whether the

³ Cf. e. g. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 267.

⁴ For the generally accepted view, cf. e. g. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 76; Weber, *Philologus*, *loc. cit.*, p. 405 (*Rh. Mus.*, LXXXI, 1932, p. 1). Cf. also above, pp. 32 f., where it has been pointed out that in the Arsinoë poem, which gives the genealogy of the Messenian hero Machaon and his family, the original myth is changed so as to adapt it to the intended purpose.

verses in which the word appears were written by the poet of the sixth century—they may constitute a later addition—, but there is no reason for assuming that they were inserted long after 500 B. C.⁵ In the fifth century, at any rate, the name “Asclepiads” in its generic sense was well known and generally accepted (*e. g.* T. 220).⁶ Under these circumstances it is hard to believe that the designation of physicians as “Asclepiads” should not have been current even earlier; if the term was commonly applied during the fifth century, it is safe to assume that its use goes back to the sixth century. Now the poems of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* are usually dated around 600 B. C., or even as late as the first two decades of the sixth century.⁷ Granted that there still remains a slight margin between the time in which the Coronis *Eoee* was composed and that for which the application of the term “Asclepiads” to physicians in general can be proved, the suggestion as to the purpose of the Hesiodic poem hardly loses in plausibility.

Whatever Hesiod's intention, this much is undoubtedly true: physicians were called “Asclepiads,” they were considered Asclepius' children, and it was the hero Asclepius who came to be recognized as their father, their patron saint, as the one whose name they carried. It was not Asclepius, the god of medicine, to whom the physicians were related. As a medical deity, Asclepius was not recognized even in the fifth century B. C., except in a few isolated areas of Greece.⁸ The generic use of the term “As-

⁵ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 267-8, says: “Ἀσκληπιάδης, ‘a son of Asklepios,’ occurs as a generic name for all physicians as early as the poetry of Theognis . . .”; cf. also R. Herzog, *S. B. Berl.*, 1935, p. 992. Yet the verses do not have the “seal” or “signature,” the most important criterion of genuineness in Jacoby's opinion (F. Jacoby, *Theognis*, *S. B. Berl.*, phil.-hist. Klasse, 1931, pp. 90 ff.), and an important one also according to Edmonds (J. M. Edmonds, *Elegy and Iambus*, I, 1931, p. 20 [Loeb]). I therefore hesitate to date the lines in the 6th century. On the other hand, since they are preserved in A (cf. Jacoby, *op. cit.*, p. 155), they can hardly be of a very late date, and the tenor of the poem, its insistence on good breeding in contrast to good education, fits the Megarian Theognis rather than the Athenian poet. Edmonds, *op. cit.*, p. 13, suspects the verses because some of their metrical characteristics do not occur before Hellenistic times; but the lines are quoted already by Aristotle, *N. E.*, 1179 b 5 ff.

⁶ That Asclepius was considered the ancestor of physicians and that they were called after him in the early fifth century B. C. would be attested in T. 105a, provided that Weber's interpretation of the words in question (*op. cit.*, p. 394) were correct. He understands *πατέρος* as referring to Asclepius, “der auch für Pindaros sterbliche Ahnherr der Ärzte.” Usually, however, *πατέρος* is taken to refer to Apollo, cf. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar*, II, 1932, pp. 140 f., a much more plausible interpretation. Besides, Pindar's words seem to mean no more than “a second Asclepius or Apollo.” The expressions used are too ambiguous to support any conclusive argument.

⁷ Cf. above, p. 24, n. 4.

⁸ For the rise of the worship of the god Asclepius, cf. below, pp. 111 ff. Apart from the fact that the use of the term “Asclepiads” apparently is older than the divine cult of Asclepius, no one will share any longer the view accepted even in the beginning of the 20th century that lay physicians were called “Asclepiads,” because ancient medi-

clepiads," however, implies a concept of Asclepius that was generally known and accepted, and this was true only of the hero Asclepius, whether the legend attached to him was that told by Hesiod or not. Moreover, that Asclepius, the craftsman, half human, half divine, should have become the patron saint of physicians seems well in accord with the development of Greek concepts concerning the origin of arts and sciences in general.

As Homer attests, in his time doctors were called "Paeonii," the sons of Paeon.⁹ Paeon was the ancient god of medicine, the physician of the Olympians. Since in early days it was common belief that knowledge was bestowed upon men by the gods, that they had obtained their skill from the deity—the artisans revered Athena and Hephaestus, the poets worshipped the Muses as their patron gods—it was natural that the human doctors were considered members of the family of Paeon.¹⁰ Gradually Paeon was replaced by Apollo or identified with him who, even in the *Iliad*, had some medical functions and finally conquered the whole province of medicine. Consequently one would expect that physicians should have been called sons of Apollo; yet, although it is sometimes asserted that it was Apollo to whom they owed their art, physicians were never named after him.¹¹ Instead, from the sixth century on they were called Asclepiads, sons of Asclepius. For at that time it was no longer taken for granted that the wisdom of the craftsman was a gift of the gods. What men knew and accomplished, they believed to owe to themselves; by

cine originated in the temples of Asclepius, a widespread prejudice already at the end of antiquity (T. 414; 231, where the father of the famous physician Democedes, himself a physician, is said to have been a priest of Asclepius). Cf. in general, E. T. Withington, *The Asclepiadae and the Priests of Asclepius, Studies in the History and Method of Science*, ed. C. Singer, II, 1921, pp. 192 ff.; cf. also below, n. 32. As far as I am aware, J. Rosenbaum in K. Sprengel, *Geschichte der Arzneikunde*, I⁴, 1846, p. 189, n. 59, was the only one to realize clearly that the Asclepiads are related not to the god, but rather to the hero Asclepius.

⁹ Cf. *Odyssey*, IV, 232; that here all physicians are named "Paeonii," not only those from Egypt, has been shown by Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 49. Cf. also Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 83, n. 58; R. Pohl, *De Graecorum medicis publicis*, Diss. Berl., 1905, p. 11.

¹⁰ Cf. *Odyssey*, loc. cit.: γενέθλη. Solon, *Fr.* 1, 57 [Diehl] speaks of ἔργον Παιῶνος. For the early attitude towards the crafts, cf. C. F. Nägelsbach, *Die Homerische Theologie*, 1840, pp. 54-56; W. Graf Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Griechische Kulturentstehungslehren, Bibliothek f. Philosophie*, XXVI, Beilage zu Heft 3-4 des *Archivs f. Gesch. d. Philosophie*, XXXVI, 1924, p. 3, n. 16.

¹¹ For Apollo as the god of medicine, cf. above, p. 36, n. 51. For Paeon and Apollo, cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 153 ff.; the distinction between the two is still upheld by Hesiod, *Fr.* 194 [Rzach]; cf. also Scholion, *Odyssey*, IV, 231. Euripides (T. 220) claims that Apollo gave to the Asclepiads the knowledge of drugs. Callimachus, *Hymnus in Apollinem*, 45 f., states that they know from Apollo how to save from death. But these assertions are rather isolated. At any rate, physicians were never known as "Apollonidae."

slow and painful toil, progress was supposed to have been brought about through human endeavor. "Forsooth the gods have not revealed everything to men from the beginning, rather men by themselves, with time going on, have found out the better through their own investigations," philosophers asserted.¹² In their opinion, those who through valuable inventions and artful skills had remedied human deficiencies and bettered the miserable lot of mortals remained anonymous. In the imagination of the many, however, these individuals were given names and became definite personalities, beings of unusual gifts, of a superior character, of an origin half human, half divine. Such figures, then, usurped the place which had formerly been held by the gods and became the patronymic heroes of the various crafts. Thus the artists who of old had known and followed the art of Athena or Hephaestus were put under the patronage of Daedalus and were called "Daedalidae"; thus the rhapsodists who had pursued the art of the Muses now considered Homer their patron and named themselves "Homeridae." In the same way, physicians who, as long as the arts were under divine tutelage, had been considered the sons of Paeon, became the sons of the hero Asclepius when it was assumed that the crafts were the accomplishment of human exertion.¹³

To be sure, in late antiquity some people believed that Asclepius was the real forefather or ancestor of all physicians. He had invented medicine, they thought, and had imparted his knowledge to his sons, Machaon and Podalirius, who in turn had transmitted it to their children and their children's children. Medicine, then, for quite some time had been the privilege of one family, the Asclepiads, the descendants of Asclepius in the literal sense of the word. But at a certain point in the historical process the medical art had ceased to be their property. Other people, too, in some way or other had acquired medical knowledge and dared to practice; medicine had slipped out of the hands of the sons of Asclepius (T. 229 f.). Those who assumed such a development probably believed that the Asclepiads had first tried to remedy the situation by admitting

¹² Xenophanes, *Fr.* 18 [Diels-Kranz]; in general cf. Uxkull, *op. cit.*, p. 3; also A. Kleingüntner, *Ἠρώτος Εὐπετής*, *Philol.*, Suppl. XXVI, 1, 1933, pp. 26 ff.

¹³ The parallel between Asclepiads, Homerids and Daedalids has often been drawn, though for purposes other than that of explaining the name Asclepiads, cf. e. g. Welcker, *Götterlehre*, III, p. 102; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 231. That in early centuries the term Homerids was regarded as derived ἀπὸ ὀνόματος, not ἀπὸ γένους, follows from Acusilaus, *Fr.* 2, and Hellanicus, *Fr.* 20 [Jacoby]; cf. also Jacoby's comment on the latter fragment, I, p. 438, 35 ff. T. W. Allen, *Classical Quarterly*, I, 1907, pp. 135 ff., maintains that originally the Homerids were a real family (cf. also Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Homeridai, VIII, pp. 2145 ff.). But he admits that in Pindar the expression is not used in such a sense and that the Asclepiads and Daedalids at any rate were only a fictitious family organization, cf. also below, n. 22.

through adoption outsiders who were not blood relations, in this way clinging at least to the semblance of a family craft.¹⁴ But this attempt proved to be futile. Every doctor began to be called an Asclepiad. The name which had once denoted the true children of Asclepius was finally given to all medical men by misuse of the term (T. 228). Thus, the real ancestor of the first physicians, the founder of the first family of doctors, came to be considered the ancestral hero of the craft in a merely figurative sense.

Now regardless of the question whether Asclepius was a historical personality or not, whether Machaon and Podalirius were in reality his sons or were named his sons only by the epic poets, it is safe to say that such a view, even if taken less literally than it had been intended, is untenable and utterly at variance with the facts. In Greek history there is no indication that knowledge of any kind was ever restricted to one particular family, nor was it believed in early centuries that craftsmanship and skill were secrets to be guarded by the initiated.¹⁵ In the Homeric period physicians were included among the itinerant craftsmen who were generally welcomed because of their unusual experience and training. Nothing intimates that at that time castes of craftsmen existed; those who had to earn their livelihood apparently were free to choose whatever work they wanted.¹⁶ Later it was precisely the fact that everybody was allowed to practice without any restriction, even without examination, that was constantly discussed by medical writers and was held responsible for the low standard of the art of medicine.¹⁷ Certainly, in every age and in all civilizations, especially in their early stages, it was customary for the son to follow his father's trade. It is not impossible that in this way some medical knowledge was handed on from generation to generation and thus remained restricted to one particular family, at least for a certain time;¹⁸ but this can have been true only in a limited sense, not of

¹⁴ Such adoptions are presupposed by the Hippocratic *Oath*, *C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 4, 2 ff., though without specific reference to the family of the Asclepiads. For the explanation of the passage in question, cf. L. Edelstein, *The Hippocratic Oath, Supplements to the Bull. of the Hist. of Med.*, I, 1943, pp. 39 ff.

¹⁵ This statement of course concerns only historical times. Whether all crafts were originally considered "magisches Charisma" (cf. J. Hasebroek, *Griech. Wirtschafts- u. Gesellschaftsgesch. bis zur Perserzeit*, 1931, pp. 24 f.) is quite a different problem. Asclepius, the ancestor of physicians, was a figure of the Homeric Epic, and at that time the concept of charisma was not known (contrary to Hasebroek, *loc. cit.*). Cf. Wilamowitz, *Staat u. Gesellschaft d. Griechen, Die Kultur d. Gegenwart*, Teil II, Abt. IV, 1, 1923², p. 55.

¹⁶ Cf. *Odyssey*, XVII, 383 ff., and Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁷ In general cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, p. 89; cf. also the Hippocratic *Law*, *C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 7, 2 ff.

¹⁸ Cf. below, p. 59.

medicine in general. The concept of Asclepius as the real ancestor of the doctors, of the Asclepiads as the one family of physicians—such notions resulted from late theories, invented to explain the historical process in accordance with certain ideas concerning the development of society as a whole, or in conformity with what was known of other civilizations.¹⁹

Would it be any more plausible to assume that in post-Homeric centuries the family of the Asclepiads was one of those in which medicine was hereditary, and that later, when its fame eclipsed that of all others, its name became equivalent to “physicians”? It is at least questionable whether in Homeric or post-Homeric centuries there was any such family of Asclepiads in the literal sense of the word.²⁰ It was Machaon and Podalirius who were considered the forefathers of certain families whose members gloried in their descent from these heroes, whereas Asclepius played only a secondary rôle in their family history.²¹ Moreover, the term Asclepiads was used rather vaguely, not in connection with any definite skill or achievement. “Sons of Asclepius” were simply those who practiced medicine—good and scientific medicine to be sure—but no specific knowledge was ever ascribed to them (T. 219 ff.), while other similar families, such as the Chironidae, were famous for instance for certain drugs which they had received from Chiron.²² There is then no certainty that a real family of Asclepiads ever existed, still less is there any indication that it conquered all its competitors in the field of medical practice.

In short, the assumption that Asclepius was the “father” of physicians was mere fiction. But it was a fiction that had great practical significance.

¹⁹ Aristotle assumed a gradual development of social life from the household to the family stage and city formation, cf. Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 33; 43. Besides, the example of Egypt, where there were castes and family crafts, must have impressed people who found the origin of culture in Egyptian civilization.

²⁰ In the Epic, the term “Asclepiad” means only that Machaon was regarded as son of Asclepius (T. 164, v. 204); for the strictly patronymic use of such names in the early Epic, cf. Wilamowitz, *Aristoteles und Athen*, II, 1893, pp. 180 ff. Later, Sophocles seems the only one to refer to Machaon and Podalirius as Asclepiads in the sense that they were Asclepius’ real sons (T. 152). Plato speaks of them as *παῖδες τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ* (T. 143), or *ἐκγονοὶ* (T. 123), and reserves the term *Ἀσκληπιάδαι* for physicians in general, e. g. *Republic*, III, 405 D.

²¹ Theopompus mentions Podalirius and his descendants who settled in Caria (T. 212). Hippocrates, though lastly descended from Asclepius, was a member of the Nebridae family (T. 214). Aristotle traced his origin to Machaon (T. 192).

²² Allen, who claims that the Homerids were a real family (*Classical Quarterly*, I, 1907, pp. 135 ff.), presupposes that they were in possession of the Homeric books as their distinctive privilege marking them off from all other rhapsodists. I do not think that this assumption is correct, for the name Homerids is not a family name but rather a generic one, cf. above, n. 13. But it may be true of some families of priests and seers that they had a knowledge of rites which they did not divulge to outsiders (the names are collected by Allen, p. 138), just as the Chironidae had drugs unknown to others.

By calling themselves Asclepiads, by considering themselves a unity, a family though not in blood, the physicians formed one of the first corporations of craftsmen. In order to understand why they did so, one must take into account the position of the itinerant craftsman in early Greek society.

Generally speaking the travelling trades had an important share in the formation of juridical concepts. To protect those who by leaving their homesteads had lost all inherited protection, the right of hospitality was evolved. On the basis of its assurance the craftsman came to stay with the lord of the house; through him he was safe from wanton attacks; through him he also took part in the religious rites of the house and the family, a privilege that he needed since with his home he had given up his gods too.²³ Naturally in the beginning the number of such strolling minstrels and travelling craftsmen was small; their opportunities were few indeed. Later on, when society progressed, when the number of artisans increased because there was greater need for them, it was not so much safety which was desired; life had become more civilized and more peaceful than before. But there were still two things wanting for him who had migrated from his home: he had no standing among men and he had no gods of his own. He acquired both when, as a physician, he became a member of the Asclepius "family," or, as a minstrel, one of the Homerids. For the hero after whom he was called provided him with a pedigree even in foreign communities where his own family was unknown; at the same time the patron saint of his art was the divinity to whom he could pray and on whose tutelage he could rely. He was no longer dependent upon being admitted to the religious ceremonies of strangers, an admission which became the more difficult and unlikely, the more he travelled and the shorter the time he stayed at the various places. That is why these craftsmen were the first to feel the necessity of uniting themselves under the patron of their art, however loose and devoid of formal organization such an association may have been in the beginning. That is why physicians so early rallied around the hero Asclepius.²⁴

²³ For the right of hospitality, cf. Wilamowitz, *Gesellschaft*, p. 40, who also points out how dangerous the life of these men remained. Wilamowitz does not emphasize the religious aspect of the problem; cf. however Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 77-8.

²⁴ Recent investigations have shown that in pre-Solonic or at least in Solonic times corporations (*ὀρχεῶνες*) existed which were intended to assume the rôle of the family for ritualistic and genealogical purposes, cf. E. Ziebarth, Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Orgeones, XVIII, p. 1024; cf. also Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, p. 82. The hypothesis proposed here, which suggests a similar meaning of the association of the Asclepiads at exactly that time, was intimated by Wilamowitz, *Aristoteles und Athen*, II, p. 182: "Asklepiadai . . . sind vielleicht schon eher Gilden als Geschlechter, aber sie fingieren den Geschlechtsverband"; cf. also *S.B. Berl.*, 1901, p. 22, n. 1. For the development of

But why was it Asclepius, who was chosen as the patron of physicians, not any other mythological figure? There were many more sagas dealing with physicians, with helpers in bodily pain. Almost every ancient city had its "hero doctor"; almost every section of Greece had its worship of a physician who supposedly had been the first to attempt the cure of diseases or who was a master of the healing art.²⁵ It would be presumptuous to believe that Asclepius' selection among his numerous competitors could ever be fully explained by modern inquiry. The predilection for one religious or legendary character, the rejection of another, fundamentally remains a riddle. It is only after one particular figure has proved its power of attraction, its hold over the imagination of men, that one can surmise wherein the specific appeal of the chosen hero may have consisted. As far as Asclepius is concerned, one might venture to suggest that he out-ranked all his rivals as a protector of physicians because he, and he alone together with his "real" sons—they, too, great physicians—had found a place in the *Iliad* and in the Cyclic saga. The Epic was the constant source of inspiration for the creation of new heroes. Moreover, even if Hesiod did not expressly praise the hero of physicians, his poem should have contributed at least to enhancing Asclepius' fame.²⁶ Around 600 B. C. the name of Asclepius must have been better known in all Greece than that of any other physician of old. Furthermore, physicians in their activity were not restricted to one place. Their "surname" had to be one which was full of significance for everybody. Thus the name of Asclepius naturally suggested itself to the poet or to the physicians themselves, or to him, whoever he was, who assigned the term "Asclepiads" in its generic sense to all doctors, once Homer had used it at least for Machaon: it was understandable and full of meaning to every Greek, while the fact that their hero had found favor with Homer added honor and dignity to the professional standing of the doctors.²⁷

gentilitial organizations in Greece in general, cf. Wilamowitz, *Gesellschaft*, pp. 43 ff. Hasebroeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 96 f., has stressed the fact that on the whole the "Geschlecht" was a relatively late form of organization. There can be no doubt that most of these family groups were artificial creations. On the other hand, such gentilitial fictions formed the basis for the organization of Greek society. Every association was held together through the relationship of its members to a patronymic hero, who figured as the "Rechtsperson," cf. Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Note moreover that even in later centuries the itinerant craftsmen, who came from foreign lands, were leading in the establishment of guilds, cf. E. Ziebarth, *Das griechische Vereinswesen*, 1896, pp. 192 ff.

²⁵ Cf. in general, Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 12; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 236, and below, pp. 96 f.

²⁶ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227, n. 2, expresses the opinion that Asclepius became known only through the Hesiodic poem. He underestimates the importance of the Homeric mention.

²⁷ That considerations such as these were of importance in the choice of collective names, seems to follow again from the parallel cases of the Homerids and the Daedalids.

But were Asclepius' achievements sufficient to make him acceptable as the patron of physicians? According to the Hesiodic poem—and no other legend of the hero Asclepius is known—he had healed the sick and revived the dead. The tale, however, is not preserved in its entirety. It is possible that he was also pictured as the first to cure certain diseases or as the first to invent certain remedies or instruments. The later saga is full of such instances.²⁸ Or the invention of medicine may have been ascribed to him, as was done afterwards. Eryximachus in the Platonic *Symposium*, speaking of Asclepius, calls him the forefather of physicians, the founder of the medical art (T. 348).²⁹ Yet, it would have sufficed had Asclepius been celebrated only as the healer of the sick and the restorer of the dead. These two achievements epitomize and symbolize all the ideals and aims that instigated human physicians.³⁰ As Pindar expresses it, Asclepius was the “hero who gave aid in all manner of maladies” (T. 1, v. 7). In exactly the same terminology, a Hesiodic poem characterizes Heracles as the “preserver of good and enterprising men from ruin.” Perhaps it was thought that Asclepius had been begotten by Apollo, the “savior from death,” to be a helper in disease, just as Heracles had been begotten by Zeus to be a liberator from the distress that is the lot of mortals.³¹ Whether the saga went that far or not, physicians could easily venerate in Asclepius not so much the giver of medicine, the founder of the art, but the model physician, the ideal representative of their calling, the practitioner who spent all his life in healing the sick and in raising the dead even at the risk of his own life. The hero Asclepius, the friend of Chiron, the son of Apollo, was indeed well qualified to become the patron of human healers even long before he came to be venerated as a god.³²

It is hardly by chance that the bards, who travelled around like the physicians, were named after Homer with whom everybody was familiar. Daedalus' name, at first most popular in Athens, had become generally known through the fame of the Athenian products, cf. Preller, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 497 ff. Thus all artisans could be called after him. Note that Asclepius was the only physician referred to by name in the Epic who was “available” as the hero of all doctors; Machaon and Podalirius were fixed in Caria and Messenia respectively, cf. above, pp. 19 ff.

²⁸ Cf. below, pp. 140 f.

²⁹ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 268 d, who corrects Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, p. 27, where this passage is understood as referring to the Athenians in general. In passing it should be stressed that Eryximachus, when acknowledging that Asclepius is “our forefather,” adds: “as these poets here say and I believe it.” His statement seems to indicate how clearly the artificial character of the term Asclepiads was remembered.

³⁰ Cf. above, p. 45.

³¹ Cf. the Ps. Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles*, 28-9, and for Apollo as savior from death, Hesiod, *Fr.* 194 [Rzach].

³² Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 231, says: “Den Hippokrates mögen unsere Ärzte als ihren *ἥρωα κτίστης* verehren; eine Asklepiosbüste würde ich mir nicht ins Zimmer stellen,

Now that the significance of the early Asclepius figure has been sketched as far as it seems still possible to glean its meaning from the testimonies, two questions may at last find an answer which have repeatedly been referred to, although judgment has always been suspended: was Asclepius originally connected with any regional saga or not? Was he an historical person, did he actually live on this earth? The fact that Homer and Hesiod localize the Asclepius saga in Thessaly can be taken as an indication that he really was a hero of that country.³³ But Thessaly in antiquity was considered the home of many a legendary character who had no genuine relation to that section of Greece. The mythical fantasy of the ancients showed a certain predilection for placing the lives of heroes in Thessaly.³⁴ Moreover, this region was a particularly appropriate country for Asclepius to live in. Throughout antiquity, it was famous for its healing plants. Medea, so the story went, while fleeing through the Thessalian plain, spilled her drugs and thus made the soil abound in herbs (T. 282, 15). Mount Pelion, near which Asclepius was reputed to have been born and where Chiron resided, was especially rich in remedial plants, the "hands of the gods," as they were called even by physicians.³⁵ Asclepius' localization in Thessaly, therefore, like other features of the saga, seems to be a purposeful invention, well in accord with Homer's intentions no less than with the symbolic character of the whole legend.³⁶

As regards the second problem, all the evidence points to the conclusion that Asclepius was not a historical personality. In every respect his story is that of the physician rather than that of a definite individual. Against the modern proponents of the historicity of the Asclepius figure it must be maintained that if Asclepius was a real man, tradition has obliterated all

wenn ich Mediziner wäre, denn er ist der Gott von Epidauros." But ancient doctors did have an Asclepius statue in their homes (T. 501); they were called sons of Asclepius, not sons of Hippocrates. It is hardly permissible to see their attitude as an "historical error." Wilamowitz' judgment is determined by the prejudice that Asclepius was only the god of medicine, as is also Farnell's interpretation of the relation between Asclepius and the Asclepiads (*Hero Cults*, pp. 265 ff.).

³³ For Homer, cf. above, p. 22. For Hesiod, cf. above, p. 34.

³⁴ Cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 4; Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, p. 14, n. 1.

³⁵ For Thessaly and its wealth in herbs, cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 304; for Mount Pelion, cf. above, p. 22. The expression *χαίρες θεῶν*, used in regard to remedial plants, occurs e.g. in Scribonius Largus, p. 1, 1-3 [Helmreich]; in general, cf. L. Edelstein, *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, V, 1937, p. 229.

³⁶ I see no way of determining with certainty whether Homer was the first to place Asclepius in Thessaly, or whether the saga taken up by Homer already knew of the Thessalian hero. It would be nothing uncommon if in the beginning the story had been told without any local detail. Even in the *Iliad* there appear heroes who have no country, e.g. Ajax (cf. Wilamowitz, *S.B. Berl.*, 1925, p. 242; *ibid.*, p. 60).

detail concerning his existence to such a degree that it can no longer be proved.³⁷ Such an assertion, however, does not yet mean that Asclepius must have been a wholly fictitious character of the saga. After all, there was a god Asclepius. Is it not possible that the hero was only a "decayed god" who was adorned with all the features of a heroic legend only after he had lost his original divinity? A decision on this issue will depend upon the analysis of those testimonies which deal with Asclepius, the god of medicine.

³⁷ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 235 ff. He holds that the legend "somewhat confirms our impression of his humanity as the primary fact" (p. 242). But even though Asclepius' humanity, according to the legend, is the very core of his existence, this fact does not imply his historicity at the same time. It is hardly necessary to enumerate again all those features of the saga which seem to have symbolic meaning. Only so much I wish to point out, that the result of the interpretation given also implies that Wilamowitz, not Thraemer, is correct in his explanation of the name Coronis, cf. above, p. 34, n. 44.

II. THE GOD ASCLEPIUS

Unlike the hero who had vanished and lived on only in the memory of men full of admiration for the feats which he had once accomplished, the god Asclepius was one of the immortals and ever-present in the holy shrines at Epidaurus, Tricca, Athens, Cos, Pergamum and wherever else he had taken up his residence. Leaning on his staff around which the serpent was coiled, he revealed himself to the race of mortals unremittingly and without envy. In their dreams he healed the sick who came to sleep in his magnificent temples. He was the helper to whom almost everybody prayed in supplication, imploring his succor in every kind of distress. He was the savior, mightier and stronger than any other deity; he was the lover of man, kinder and more benevolent than any other god, lending his hand to help mankind.

Who was this deity who, when the god of a new Gospel appeared, became perhaps his most significant and most powerful antagonist in the spiritual struggle that ensued between paganism and Christianity? How is this deity related to the hero Asclepius of whom Homer and Hesiod knew? These are the first questions which one will naturally ask if, after having studied the history of the hero of physicians, one turns his attention to the god of medicine.

When in the nineteenth century the first attempts were made to explain the nature of Greek divinities within the limits of the scientific categories which result from modern theories concerning the origin of human belief in superior beings, the god Asclepius was characterized as the representative of a cosmic element, or as a totem, or as the ancestral hero of one or the other of the Greek tribes.¹ Such hypotheses are no longer credited. Today the majority of scholars agree in calling Asclepius a chthonian deity. The hero Asclepius is viewed as a "decayed god," that is, as the younger of the two Asclepius figures that are known. And it is maintained that the god was revered from time immemorial.²

¹ The oldest theories on Asclepius are summarized by Thraemer, Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, pp. 621 ff. For Asclepius as the god of the Phlegyans, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1643, 65 ff.; as the deification of air, *e.g.* Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 514; as (dog) totem, S. Reinach, *Rev. Arch.*, IV, 1884, pp. 129 ff. H. Usener, *Rh. Mus.*, XLIX, 1894, p. 470, interprets Asclepius as a god of light.

² For Asclepius as a chthonian god, cf. *e.g.* Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 305; for the prevalence of this explanation in modern literature, cf. also Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 235. The consequence that the hero Asclepius is a god in disguise, is expressly drawn by Pfister, *Bursian*, 1930, p. 128, and is silently presupposed by all who believe in the aboriginal divinity of Asclepius.

Yet there can be no doubt that the god Asclepius, whose fame resounded throughout the ancient world, was received by all the Greeks at a rather late date. The first testimony which unambiguously refers to Asclepius as a god is furnished by an Athenian inscription recording his arrival at Athens in 420 B. C. (T. 720).³ Of course, Asclepius' divinity must have been recognized before, at any rate in Epidaurus from where he came to Athens. On the other hand, Pindar in 475 B. C., when writing about Asclepius, still speaks of him as a hero.⁴ In the beginning of the fifth century B. C., then, the god Asclepius can hardly have been acknowledged or even have been known everywhere. It is therefore assumed that the chthonian Asclepius at first was venerated only in an isolated part of Greece, in Thessaly, where Tricca most probably was the oldest place of his cult. From there he gradually extended his influence over the neighboring countries, even down to Epidaurus, until in the fifth century the god suddenly emerged from the darkness of his provincial existence into the full light of Panhellenic fame.⁵

As far as arguments have been brought forward in support of the theory that Asclepius is a chthonian god, they concern mainly the name of the deity, his cult and his myth. Yet, from the very same instances it has also been concluded by some that Asclepius must originally have been a heroized mortal who attained godhead in prehistoric centuries.⁶ Again, speculation on the etymology of the name alone has prompted the assumption that Asclepius was a pre-Greek deity while, curiously enough, it is admitted at the same time that according to the other evidence the god Asclepius seems to be an Epidaurian "invention" of relatively late date.⁷

The modern debate, then, has not led to any generally accepted solution of the problem. It has proved, I think, only this much: the name of the god cannot be understood at all and therefore must be disregarded in the argument, while the data on the cult may at best be called indecisive evidence.⁸ Of all the tests usually applied in investigations of this kind,

³ The inscription itself was set up in the early fourth century B. C. That the events mentioned belong in the year 420 has been shown by A. Koerte, *Ath. Mitt.*, XVIII, 1893, pp. 247 ff.; XXI, 1896, pp. 313 f. Cf. also Kutsch, *Attische Heilgötter*, pp. 16 ff.

⁴ Cf. above, p. 22. The year 475 is the date of the composition of *Pythiae*, III.

⁵ Cf. e. g. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 305.

⁶ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 238 ff. That the hero was revered as a god very early is assumed *ibid.*, pp. 247 ff.

⁷ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 229 ff., who candidly states that his interpretation ends in an insoluble *aporia*, *ibid.*, p. 223.

⁸ Cf. in general Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 238 ff. The various opinions concerning the name are summarized below, pp. 80 ff. For the cult, cf. Ch. IV, *passim*. Frequently the chthonian character of Asclepius is deduced from the fact that one of his attributes is

there remains only the myth as a criterion of the correctness of the two main theories according to which Asclepius is a chthonian deity or a deified mortal. It therefore appears necessary to scrutinize more closely the myth attached to the god Asclepius.

In doing so, one has to face the fact that during recent decades it has become questionable whether mythology has any bearing on problems of religion. It is held by not a few that the divine figures, at least the true gods, are older than the myths told about them, and that myths therefore are irrelevant for the interpretation of the nature of a deity. However, the issue which has not yet been clarified is precisely whether Asclepius was one of those true gods for whom myths were invented only in later times, or whether he was a hero who gained divinity through deeds and whose myth expresses adequately the essence of his divine being.⁹ In the case of Asclepius, then, a study of the myth seems indispensable.

1. THE DIVINE MYTH

In the preserved literature the divine myth of Asclepius is nowhere recounted at great length. Only that form of the saga which was current in the second century A. D. is attested in some detail. Pausanias (T. 7) relates that on his visit to Epidaurus he learned from the people there that in their belief Asclepius' mother, Coronis, when with child by Apollo, came to the Epidaurian country. Near the city, where later the most famous sanctuary of the god was to rise, Coronis gave birth to Asclepius and exposed her child immediately after it was born. A goat that pastured about the mountains nourished the infant, and the watchdog of the flock guarded it until it was found by the herdsman. When he beheld the child, lightning flared from its face, thus revealing the divinity of the babe. At the same time it became known all over the world that the great discoverer of medical help, the savior of the sick, the reviver of the dead, had made his appearance on this earth at Epidaurus. Thus Pausanias. At first glance his account seems worlds apart from the myth of Hesiod. Yet there are certainly also traits distinctly reminiscent of the heroic saga. The god Asclepius, too, is the son of Apollo and Coronis; he has come into this world to heal the sick and to raise the dead. But why is he now

a snake; cf. *e. g.* Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 305; Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1655, 25 ff. For the meaning of this symbol, cf. below, pp. 229 f.

⁹ For the modern point of view concerning the relationship between mythology and religion, cf. especially Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Mythos, XVI, pp. 1375-6, and Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 7. In regard to heroes or saints who became gods, the value of the myth, as far as I am aware, has never been doubted. Cf. also Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 2.

regarded an Epidaurian? Why is he now believed to have been exposed by his mother rather than to have been brought forth to life through the saving hand of his father? The Epidaurian myth apparently is a late version of the divine saga,¹ and Pausanias' report is incomplete; it concerns only the god's birth. Did other tales circulate, and how were they related to each other? What were the outlines of the whole story?

The oldest divine birth myth attested is the one to be found in the Homeric *Hymn to Asclepius* (T. 14; 31), a document that probably goes back to the end of the fifth century B. C.² The god, it says, was the son of Apollo and Coronis, the daughter of Phlegyas; he was born in the Dotian plain. The hymn then is in perfect agreement with the data given by Hesiod in regard to Asclepius' ancestry and place of birth. Only one difference can be detected: all traits of violence and unusualness are eradicated. The simple assertion that Coronis gave birth to Asclepius has replaced the unique story of his being born by means of an operation. It is the myth of a god that is told here; it is Delphi whose influence pervades this account; consequently all offensive features are repressed.³ But otherwise the narratives are identical.

Throughout antiquity the tale of the Homeric hymn basically remained the pattern of the Asclepius saga. Apollo was always considered Asclepius' father. Tradition never varied in this respect.⁴ Coronis, after some dissension, came to be generally recognized as the mother who was found worthy to bear the future god. Only one detail was changed completely: Asclepius lost his affiliation with Thessaly.

As for Coronis, the divine hymn of the early fourth century still commends her, the daughter of Phlegyas, as the mother of Asclepius who was born in the Phlegyan country (T. 592).⁵ But shortly after the restoration of Messenia, that is after 370 B. C., the Messenians renewed their demands on Asclepius. His mother, they said, was Arsinoë (T. 36).⁶ In making this claim they came in conflict with those raised by

¹ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 132, n. 2, and below, pp. 72 f.

² For the date of the Homeric Hymn, cf. R. Pohl, *De Graecorum medicis publicis*, Diss. Berl., 1905, p. 12; Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 244.

³ Cf. A. D. Nock, *Conversion*, 1933, p. 23, who points out that the Homeric hymns are written in the interest of those cults and traditions with which Delphi identified itself; cf. also Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Orakel, XVIII, p. 844, 30 ff.

⁴ Cf. above, p. 35, where it has been shown that the same is true of the father of the hero Asclepius.

⁵ The importance of this testimony has rightly been stressed by Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 309; it shows how strong the belief in the Thessalian origin of Asclepius was in the beginning. A later copy of the old hymn (T. 592a) omits the reference to Thessaly and speaks only of Coronis, the daughter of Phlegyas.

⁶ For the Messenian saga, cf. above, pp. 32 f.; for the restoration of the Asclepius

the Arcadians in the same century. They gave to the god an Arcadian mother whom they probably called Arsinoë, just like the Messenians. On what grounds the people of Arcadia founded their title to Asclepius is not clear from the evidence preserved; their saga is the one least known.⁷ Although the disagreement between the two contestants probably was no more than a local argument—beyond Arcadia and Messenia Arsinoë, the mother of Asclepius, never had any importance—the discussion became so embittered that the Delphic Oracle was asked to settle the conflict. But when Apollodorus, the Arcadian, put before the Delphic priestess the question whether Asclepius was a Messenian, obviously wishing for a decision in favor of Arcadia, the Oracle answered that Asclepius was an Epidaurian (T. 36).⁸ For Delphi in the meantime had abandoned the Thessalian myth which it had formerly approved, it had shifted its allegiance to the Epidaurian saga.

The Epidaurians at first seem to have accepted the version of the Homeric hymn; it was probably one of their festivals for which this song was composed or at which it was recited.⁹ But around 300 B. C. Isyllus

cult in connection with the rise of the new Messenian state, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isylllos*, p. 78, and above, p. 33, n. 40.

⁷ The claims of the Arcadians seem strange indeed, for the original legend of the hero has no connection whatsoever with Arcadia. Nor had the Arcadian worship of the god Asclepius more than regional significance, although his temples rose relatively early in that region. On the other hand, it is again in Arcadia that the three Asclepii, distinguished by later tradition (T. 379 f.), were supposed to have lived. The occurrence of the Asclepius saga in this province, which up to the fifth century was somewhat isolated from the rest of Greece, could perhaps be explained by the fact that part of the Messenian population after the second conquest of their country by the Lacedaemonians migrated to Arcadia (cf. Polybius, IV, 33, and K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 1, 1912, p. 334). The Messenian emigrants doubtless did not forget their old sagas, and from them the Arcadians may have received their hero Asclepius. In the Arcadian birth myth of the god (T. 17) which, as it is told by Pausanias, seems of late origin (cf. below, n. 21), Asclepius' mother is not referred to by name. But she is identified by modern scholars with Arsinoë who is the mother of one of the Arcadian heroes (T. 379); O. Immisch, *Jahrb. f. klass. Philologie*, Suppl. XVII, 1890, p. 201, also suggests that this Arsinoë is the daughter of Poseidon and Demeter. Immisch's opinion has been critically reviewed by Thraemer, *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1652, 13 ff. The data are too scanty and too vague to warrant any definite conclusions. It seems significant, however, that the name Arsinoë, which occurs in the Messenian saga, is to be found also in that of Arcadia.

⁸ The date of the oracle is not attested, but the question asked would have had little justification before the restoration of Messenia in 370 B. C.; cf. H. W. Parke, *A History of the Delphic Oracle*, 1939, p. 353. On the other hand, the decision made shows that Delphi had already recognized the Epidaurian version of the birth saga, an action that was taken around 300 B. C., but this cannot yet have been common knowledge; otherwise Apollodorus' inquiry would have had no sense. Incidentally, Wilamowitz, *Isylllos*, p. 90, believes that the words of the Oracle are directly reminiscent of those used by Isyllus (T. 594). But they also seem rather similar to the phraseology of the Homeric *Hymn to Asclepius* (T. 31); cf. T. W. Allen-W. R. Halliday-E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns*, 1936, ad XVI, 4.

⁹ For the connection of the Homeric hymn with Epidaurus, cf. below, p. 210.

(T. 594) dared to assert that both the mother and the maternal grandfather of Asclepius were inhabitants of Epidaurus, thus for the first time connecting the god's birth with that city, and he added that Coronis' name in reality had been Aigle, although on account of her beauty she was later named Coronis.¹⁰ The Delphic Oracle encouraged Isyllus to engrave on stone his paean in which the new story was recited, and to dedicate it in the temple (T. 594); Delphi thereby threw its influence on the side of the Epidaurian aspirations. Great as its authority was, the Delphic sanction could not insure the acceptance of so arbitrary a claim as the one made by Isyllus. The old-inherited beliefs proved stronger, at least in regard to Asclepius' mother. The name Aigle was never accepted by the worshippers of the god; she is not mentioned in any testimony other than that of Isyllus. The discussion whether the god was the son of Arsinoë or of Coronis went on for some time. Reconciliations of the divergent views were attempted: either it was claimed that Arsinoë had originally been called Coronis (T. 34), or Asclepius, while remaining the son of Arsinoë, became the adopted child of Coronis (T. 35).¹¹ Even in these accommodations it is apparent that Coronis was gaining ascendancy; it was she who took precedence as the mother of Asclepius. At last she emerged as the uncontested claimant.¹² In this respect, the Hesiodic poem had won the day.

¹⁰ The date of Isyllus' poem is variously given. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 39: around 280 B. C.; F. Hiller v. Gaertringen, *IG*, IV², 1, Prolegomena, p. XXVI, 29: "certo definiri non potest, quando Isyllus, qui a. 338 puer fuerat, senex rem publicam Epidauriorum ad Lycurgi Spartani mores revocaverit"; cf. also below, p. 103, n. 9. I have called Isyllus' poem the first claim on the Epidaurian origin of Coronis. K. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 115, on the evidence of a late inscription takes 'Αἰαντίδα κόρην in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (T. 33) to mean "a girl from Epidaurus." These words are usually assumed to refer to Coronis, though this identification is by no means certain (cf. Allen-Halliday-Sikes, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*). Coronis, then, would have been called an Epidaurian not later than 600 B. C., the *terminus post quem* for the Homeric hymn. But in such an interpretation too many doubtful factors are involved to make it acceptable. Moreover, it would be difficult to understand, why in the Homeric *Hymn to Asclepius*, which is of later date than that to Apollo, Coronis is said to live in Thessaly (cf. above, p. 68). Finally, Isyllus' claim that Coronis was an Epidaurian would certainly have been successful had it been supported by so old an authority. Incidentally, Latte seems to identify 'Αἰαντίδα κόρην with Arsinoë, as does Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 80, to whom Latte refers. This interpretation is entirely unfounded. That the words in question can not be emended so as to attest an Arcadian mother of Asclepius ('Αἰαντίδα Martin) has rightly been pointed out by Wilamowitz, *ibid.*, p. 80, n. 53.

¹¹ These theories evidently were local transformations of the saga, for they occur in books on Argos and Cnidos; the authority for T. 35 is Socrates (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, III [2. Reihe], p. 806; 808 f.), that for T. 34 is Aristides, whose date is unknown, cf. *op. cit.*, II, p. 886, 10 ff. Yet the divergence of the saga regarding Asclepius' mother is also referred to by the historian Apollodorus (T. 5), as well as by the mythographer (T. 3).

¹² In T. 8 for instance the Coronis version is called "the current story" (ὁ παρὰ πᾶσι λόγος).

Yet Asclepius no longer was considered a Thessalian. Coronis had borne him in Epidaurus—this came to be the belief commonly adopted throughout antiquity. No other place, whatever its fame as a cult center of Asclepius, neither Cos nor Pergamum, could lay any claim upon Asclepius as a native of their cities. Scholars advocated Tricca as the birthplace of the god (T. 11),¹³ but no attention was paid by the pious to their deductions. In the eyes of Julian, the great devotee of the god, Asclepius was an Epidaurian (T. 307); Proclus held the same belief (T. 446), and for the many, Epidaurus unquestionably was the holy city of Asclepius (*e. g.* T. 20).¹⁴ Unfounded as the Epidaurian demands were, they remained victorious and they were sanctioned by Delphi—for the sole reason, no doubt, that Epidaurus was the center and bulwark of the Asclepius religion.¹⁵ Delphi first gave preference to the Thessalian version over that of the Messenians despite the fact that the latter was of an almost equally early date and even more in conformity with the Delphic ideals. It was probably political considerations that were primarily responsible for this decision. Delphi, which up to the seventh century B. C. had very close relations with the Dorian tribes, later came more and more under Thessalian influence; around 600 B. C. the Thes-salians held the hegemony over the Delphic amphictyony. The Messenians, on the other hand, from the beginning of the seventh century ceased to exert political influence and power. Moreover, the Asclepius whose fame resounded through the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries, was the hero Asclepius, who was reputed to have come from Thessaly.¹⁶ When in the fourth century the independence of Messenia

¹³ Strabo places the oldest sanctuary of the god Asclepius in Tricca (T. 714). Like his authority, Apollodorus, he seems to have identified the Homeric hero with the god, cf. above, pp. 18; 24, and below, p. 93. That is why I have not hesitated to quote his testimony for both Asclepius figures. For the scholars' decision in favor of Tricca as the birthplace of the hero Asclepius, cf. above, p. 18. At the end of antiquity the demands of Tricca were revived (cf. *e. g.* T. 13); this, one can only understand as an archaistic predilection for Homeric opinions, in keeping with the whole attitude of late centuries.

¹⁴ Panofka (*Berl. Phil.-Hist. Abh.*, 1845, pp. 276 ff.; 320; cf. Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 737), starting from the presupposition that any cult of Asclepius *παῖς* proves a birth saga, attempted to ascertain a number of local traditions concerning the birth of Asclepius beyond those discussed here. Mainly on the evidence of archaeological material he names twelve such places. His conclusions were rejected by Thraemer (*Pauly-Wissowa*, II, s. v. *Asklepios*, *passim*) as unfounded, or at least as too far-fetched. In my opinion, no certain results can be arrived at by Panofka's method, the less so since the cult devoted to a child can be interpreted in a very different way; cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 276, and Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 132, who considers this cult an old one which became associated with Asclepius only later.

¹⁵ For the rôle of Epidaurus in connection with the Asclepius worship, cf. below, pp. 238 ff.

¹⁶ For Thessaly and Delphi, cf. Parke, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-21; for Messenia, cf. Berve, *op. cit.*, I, p. 73; for the hero Asclepius, cf. above, p. 63.

was finally restored, when the Messenian cult of Asclepius was revived, when Arcadia announced its title to Asclepius, the supremacy of the Coronis myth was too well established to be challenged successfully by either Messenia or Arcadia. The Oracle expressly rejected the Messenian pretensions and, indirectly, those of Arcadia. It was forced to support the claims which Epidaurus had vindicated for herself. Where else could the god have been born if not in that city where his greatest sanctuary was to be found, where everybody went to seek his help; the place to which most of the other temples traced their origin?

While Asclepius' birthplace was thus changed, partly for political and partly for religious reasons, Hesiod's account of Asclepius' birth was not retained merely because it offended the religious conscience of later generations. As is evidenced already by the Homeric hymn, the Hesiodic tale was irreconcilable with the feelings of the pious. They could not believe that Asclepius' mother married a mortal before the divine child was born, that Apollo killed her whom he had chosen as the mother of the savior, and finally that he snatched the child from its mother's womb.¹⁷ Isyllus alone, audacious as he was in proposing another name for Coronis, remained faithful to the old tradition, at least in so far as he made Apollo act as an obstetrician, though not as a surgeon: together with the Fates and Lachesis he assisted Aigle in the pangs of birth (T. 32).¹⁸ But usually the divine myth is satisfied with stating that Asclepius was the child of Coronis (T. 14; 587; 592 f.). Awe and reverence make it no longer permissible to say more. Instead, religious fantasy begins to picture and amplify other details that were connected with the god's birth. Extraordinary circumstances, indicative of the future greatness of the child, are embroidered into the design. Isyllus recounted that Asclepius was born in the sacred temple of Epidaurus (T. 32), an unheard-of event, since for mortals it was unlawful that any birth should take place within the precincts of the sanctuary (T. 488).¹⁹ In the later legend, Asclepius' mother comes from abroad; thus the god, though born in Epidaurus, is a foreigner; the child is exposed; it is nourished by an animal; a stepfather rears it.²⁰ All these data, just as the light that

¹⁷ Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 308, rightly states the fact that in the religious tradition no punishment can be inflicted upon Coronis.

¹⁸ Isyllus' version of the birth saga may also be influenced by Dorian religious beliefs, according to which male deities help the parturient; cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 194; *Glaube*, I, p. 99, n. 1; p. 232.

¹⁹ For the Epidaurian law, cf. below, p. 192, n. 3.

²⁰ Both the Epidaurian and the Arcadian myths assume that Asclepius was exposed, and nursed by an animal, and reared by a stepfather. In the Arcadian saga (T. 17) *Τρύων*, a dove, is mentioned; the stepfather is the illegitimate son of the eponymous

radiates from the child and the immediate proclamation of its birth to all mankind, are typical of the birth saga of a "divine man," a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*.²¹ In short, the birth myth of the god gradually changed from a unique report into a common pattern that was in accord with the religious tenets of late centuries. Yet this gradual transformation cannot obscure the fact that it is still the characters of the old heroic saga with whom the story deals, that basically it is the Hesiodic tale which is here retold.

Nor does the divine myth exhibit substantially new features in regard to Asclepius' biography. Explicit and definite as the legend was concerning the ancestry and the birth of the god, it seems to have been strangely reticent about the particulars of his ensuing life. There are no testimonies reporting the experiences of the god when he was a youth and when he grew up; nor is it reported whether he remained in Epidaurus all his life or went also to other places. All realistic details seem to be missing in the divine legend, just as they were in that of the hero.²² As for his deeds, the fact that Asclepius was a healer of the sick, a raiser of the dead, was emphasized by the divine myth (T. 7), as it was by the heroic legend. Asclepius, so the Delphic Oracle affirmed, was born "a great joy to men, a soother of cruel pangs" (T. 31; cf. 36).²³ Healing,

Arcadian hero; in the Epidaurian saga (T. 7) the stepfather is the shepherd Aresthanas, the animal, according to Pausanias (T. 7), is a goat, according to others, among them Apollodorus (T. 5; 9), a dog. The latter statement is usually considered erroneous and a misrepresentation of the original myth. Yet the cult statue of the Epidaurian god (T. 630) showed him with a dog. It seems, then, that this feature is part of old tradition. The mention of the goat may have a hieratic meaning, for goats were not sacrificed in Epidaurus (T. 532). For a more detailed discussion of these topics, cf. below, p. 227.

²¹ In general, cf. L. Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ*, I-II, 1935-36. His analysis of the Asclepius story (II, p. 106) does not cover all pertinent data. Concerning the general significance of the additional facts to which I have referred, cf. Bieler, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 29; 46. Other details which would fit into the legend of the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*-type are the change of Asclepius' name (T. 271 ff.), his birth in the temple (T. 32), the prophecy of his future greatness and of his resurrection through the gods (T. 2, *vv.* 642 ff.); cf. Bieler, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 28; 37; 48. The Arcadian and the Epidaurian sagas, on account of these typically late features, hardly reflect early traditions. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 84, n. 61, traced Pausanias' account to Ister, the pupil of Callimachus (Wendel, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Mythographie, XVI, p. 1366, 54 ff., rightly stresses the impossibility of deciding whom Pausanias follows). An early date was also assumed by Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1650, 36 ff.; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 253; Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 308. Later, however, Wilamowitz changed his opinion and declared the myth to be a very late invention, though he failed to give any reasons (*Glaube*, I, p. 132, n. 2). Note that Imperial Epidaurian coins represent the birth myth as attested by Pausanias, cf. Imhoof-Gardner, *Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*, *ad loc.* That the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*-version bears striking resemblance with the legend of the Christ Child has been stressed by Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 308, n. 3.

²² Cf. above, pp. 52 f.; 63 f. One late hymn (T. 593) mentions Asclepius' education by Chiron; for the family of the god, cf. below, pp. 85 ff.

²³ The hymn of Sophocles (T. 587) calls Coronis the mother of the god "who wards off pains." The hymn of Macedonius (T. 593) holds that Asclepius was born "as a

then, was the task which was set before the god, the mission for which he was destined. Yet concerning the cures which the god performed while living on earth, the data are scanty again. Hippolytus must have been among Asclepius' patients; his thank-offerings were recorded in the Epidaurian temple (T. 739, 4). One of the sanctuaries, moreover, was believed to have been dedicated by Heracles after his wound had been treated by Asclepius; obviously, then, it was the god who was thought to have taken care of this case.²⁴ Only one healing is attributed specifically to the god, and to the god alone: that of Askles, the tyrant of Epidaurus. From him, so the Epidaurians believed, the name of the god was derived (T. 271 ff.).²⁵ Beyond these instances, however, the god's practice cannot be inferred with any degree of certainty. Nor can the medical discoveries be specified which were referred to in the Epidaurian account of his birth (T. 7). Only a few data may be surmised from dispersed references dealing with certain improvements in medicine with which the god was credited.²⁶

One thing seems certain: there was nothing in the Asclepius myth that was in the least reminiscent of other divine legends which ascribed to the deities "all of the acts which are counted by men disgraceful and shameful, thieving and wenching and dealing deceitfully one with another."²⁷ Granted that the tradition is fragmentary, that stories may have been current which are not preserved, there can have been no stories of love affairs or of dissension, tales amoral in tone or character. Otherwise it would be incomprehensible that the Christian polemic, eager as it was to find fault with the outrageous behavior of the pagan gods, does not refer to any derogatory incident in the life of Asclepius, the most dangerous enemy of Christ.²⁸ The record of the god must have been spotless indeed, just as was that of the hero.

defender from illness and a healer of pain." The hymn of Erythrae (T. 592) proclaims that Apollo "begat great joy for man when he mingled in love with Coronis."

²⁴ One can hardly assume that the divine Asclepius restored to life those who were the enemies of the gods, cf. above, p. 47. But the old sagas may have been changed in regard to motivations or persons, or less offensive variants of the same story may have been selected. In this connection it is interesting to note that according to the tradition of the Epidaurian temple, Hippolytus met his death through the curse of his father, Theseus, not through a goddess; cf. above, p. 41.

²⁵ Cf. above, n. 21; below, p. 80.

²⁶ Cf. below, pp. 141 ff.

²⁷ Xenophanes, *Fr.* 11 [Diels-Kranz] = Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.*, IX, 193 (transl. by R. G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus*, III [Loeb]).

²⁸ The only reproach which the Church Fathers were able to bring forth against Asclepius is the accusation that he was "a bastard" (T. 8; 9; 233)—a claim that had been made already in Cicero's time (T. 9)—and that he was in love with Hippolytus (T. 83). Both these charges are commonly found in the Christian slander of

Born like a human being, having practiced medicine like a physician, the god Asclepius finally suffered the death of a mortal. That this was so is certified by no testimony which can unambiguously be referred to the divine myth, as it was told by Asclepius' priests and held true by his worshippers. Yet the arguments of the Christian Fathers warrant the conclusion that in the opinion of the many death had been the appointed lot of the god. Time and again the Apologists insist that to believe in the godhead of Jesus, who died the death of a mortal, is by no means stranger than to acclaim the god Asclepius who suffered the same fate (*e. g.* T. 235; cf. 112). They could hardly have made use of this analogy, had not the death of the god Asclepius been a fact commonly agreed upon.²⁹

But if Asclepius the god had died, he had to come to life again, he had to become immortal, for he was ever-present in his temples. At the end of antiquity some seem to have assumed that Zeus struck Asclepius with his thunderbolt in order to make him a god (T. 236).³⁰ There were also other stories: Asclepius was supposed to have come back with the permission of the Fates from the nether world to which he had fallen prey just like any other human being (T. 237; cf. also T. 2, *vv.* 647 f.). Or it was the gods who were believed to have revived Asclepius, and their motives in making him one of their kind are variously given; it was either Zeus' wish to gratify Apollo (T. 75),³¹ or it was the compas-

Greek gods. Concerning the importance which the lack of objectionable features in the Asclepius myth had for the rise of the cult and for the rôle which Asclepius assumed in the discussion between Christians and heathens, cf. below, pp. 113; 135.

²⁹ How the divine myth explained Asclepius' death remains an open question. The Christian polemic tends to give the impression that Asclepius was killed by Zeus "deservedly" (T. 233). Lucian too asserts that Asclepius died because he did what he ought not to have done (T. 265). In the same way Ovid (T. 75) explains Asclepius' death as caused by his having infringed upon the rights of Hades. On the other hand, Origenes maintains that men do obeisance to Asclepius "as to one who changed from mortal to god through his virtue" (T. 242). This interpretation seems to imply that Asclepius instead of being punished by Zeus died a natural death. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 76, holds that the worshippers of Asclepius cannot possibly have believed in his destruction by Zeus on account of sinful deeds. In this sharply accentuated form the statement may be correct. But is it really incompatible with ancient religious feelings that Zeus should have been supposed to have destroyed the helper of men, the raiser of the dead, and that nevertheless people later revered him as a god? The ancient testimonies often mention these two facts together without any further comment. Cf. also below, n. 30.

³⁰ Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1654, 40, says: "An den Blitztod des Asklepios schliessen spätere Schriftsteller seine Apotheose. . . ." This statement is hardly correct in its generality. Rohde, *Psyche*, I, p. 320 ff., suggests that such an interpretation of death through lightning, though it is attested only by late authors, is very ancient. If this is so, it would have been easy indeed to reinterpret the heroic saga and from the beginning to give to Asclepius' death a meaning that fitted his new dignity.

³¹ In reviving Asclepius, Zeus himself, as Ovid says (T. 75), does for the sake of

sion of the gods on Asclepius that brought about his resurrection, an act of mercy for which no further reasons are adduced (T. 265). Which of these versions was the canonized one, cannot be determined.

While, unlike the hero, the god was resurrected by the intervention of the gods, it is nevertheless clear that the divine legend is nothing but a transformation of the heroic saga. To be sure, its tendency was completely reversed; its main content, however, remained the same. Old features were omitted only in so far as they were incompatible with the divinity now ascribed to Asclepius; new facts were introduced only in so far as they were indispensable for the story of a god.³²

To express it differently: according to the divine myth, one must conclude, the god is only the deified heroic figure. The myth attached to the god lacks all individual characteristics; in no way is the existence of a divine saga indicated that essentially deviates from the heroic legend. This would be strange indeed if the god Asclepius, as most modern interpreters assume, were a chthonian deity and one who was revered from time immemorial in certain sections of Greece from which he finally conquered the ancient world. Such a god one should expect to have possessed a legend of his own and one very different in character.³³ It should show at least certain traces of his one-time existence as an independent being. As things stand, it is hard to believe that a god Asclepius was ever worshipped anywhere irrespective of the heroic figure.

2. THE NATURE OF ASCLEPIUS' GODHEAD

The modern assumption that Asclepius was an aboriginal deity is not borne out by the evidence available. It seems necessary to seek for another explanation of his divinity. How did the ancients judge about the nature of this god? Their opinion cannot be taken lightly. Asclepius apparently was a late deity. Many of those who wrote about him were

Apollo, the father, what he forbade Asclepius, the son, to do. The star saga also gave Zeus' desire to do a favor to Apollo as the reason for Asclepius' elevation to heaven, cf. above, p. 51.

³² An analysis of the divine legend in its entirety has never been undertaken. Even Wilamowitz in his attempt to reconstruct the content of the *ἱεροὶ λόγοι* (*Isyllos*, pp. 84 ff.) restricts himself to an investigation of the genealogy and the birth legend which, as he admits, are dependent on the heroic saga. It seems to me that this judgment must be extended to the whole myth.

³³ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 244, has pointed out that Asclepius' death through Zeus' thunderbolt is inconsistent with the assumption that he was a "chthonian daimon." His thesis is correct, I think, but his argument is invalidated by the fact that as evidence he simply quotes Hesiod who speaks about the hero, while he has failed to show that the story of Asclepius' death in one form or another must have been part of the divine myth.

themselves witnesses of the rise of his worship. What they report, therefore, should have more weight than what Greek and Roman writers have to tell about those gods who were venerated from earliest times.

That in his cult Asclepius was thought to be a man-god follows with certainty from the myth attached to him. His worshippers saw in him one of the many human beings of half divine origin who had risen to the dignity of a god.¹ And it was by no means only the pious who saw in Asclepius a deified mortal. A like view of his godhead was generally held by the ancients, educated and uneducated alike (T. 248; 262). The only deviation from the more dogmatic belief was that, in the opinion of the less reverent, *Asclepius* was a human physician, deified by men after his death in grateful recognition of the help that he had bestowed upon them. Xenophon states that Asclepius was revered as a god because he had healed the sick and revived the dead (T. 243).² Other authors declare that Asclepius was regarded as a god because he perfected medicine (T. 244), or because he was the founder of the medical art (T. 245; 246). Again, the fact that he had endured so many hardships is proffered as reason for his deification (T. 241), or, in a more general way, his elevation to the rank of a god is attributed to his merits (T. 240), his benefactions (T. 239), his virtue (T. 242).³ The motivations adduced in these explanations differ, but there is agreement in one respect: Asclepius owed his new dignity to men who honored him as a god because of his accomplishments; originally he had been a mortal.

It is true, from the fifth century B. C. onward, there was a tendency to interpret all gods as human beings, as benefactors of men, as inventors of arts and crafts who later were considered gods by their grateful fellow men. Yet, in regard to Asclepius it is not the usual euhemeristic explanation that is also applied in this particular case; rather is Asclepius together with such figures as the Dioscuri, or Heracles, or Romulus taken as an indisputable example which by analogy would prove beyond doubt that all gods had originally been human beings; for even those philosophers who were principally opposed to the euhemeristic argument could

¹ In the Epidaurian saga, Asclepius was nothing but a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*, cf. above, p. 73. Even those who, like Pausanias, claimed that Asclepius was a god from the beginning (T. 255), hardly intended to say more than that he was a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* or a god in the shape of man. Pausanias himself accepted the Epidaurian birth of Asclepius; his statement is directed against those who claimed that the deification of Asclepius had taken place very late, and is intended to support the belief that he was recognized as a god even in Homer's time; cf. below, n. 6.

² The text of the passage is corrupt; but, whether the reading *θεὸς ὦν* or *θεός ὡς* is accepted, the meaning is the same as far as the problem under discussion is concerned.

³ This testimony is interesting in regard to the moral character of the god, as it was indicated by the divine legend, cf. above, p. 74.

not, and did not deny that Asclepius was a man-god (T. 251).⁴ Nay, so strong was this conviction, that he was never made subject to the physical interpretation of the nature of the divine, so widely current in antiquity. Even the Stoics, eager as they were to understand the gods as elements of the universe, did not dare to identify Asclepius with any of them and declared him to be the divine protector of medicine (T. 6).⁵

It is easily understandable that this was so. Homer had sung of Asclepius as the human father of human sons who were among the fighters before Troy (T. 135-36). Such a testimony could hardly be quoted in regard to any other god, and Apollodorus, the scholar, basing his conclusions on this historical evidence, had endorsed the assumption that Asclepius in Homeric times had not yet been a god, but simply a mortal (T. 257).⁶ Nor did the pious deny that their god was identical with the Homeric hero. To be sure, the divine myth represented the life of Asclepius as it had been pictured by Hesiod. But Asclepius, the god, retained as his sons Machaon and Podalirius, who had been celebrated by Homer and by the epic saga. The earliest known hymn in honor of the deity refers to them as his children (T. 592).⁷ Another one expressly calls Machaon and Podalirius "two healers of Greek spearsmen" (T. 593; cf. also T. 482, *vv.* 7 *ff.*), thus showing that the two were viewed as the sons of the epic Asclepius. And at the end of antiquity Aristides in his speech in honor of the Asclepiads stated that just as Triptolemus distributed the gifts of Demeter over the earth, thus Machaon and Podalirius, who had grown up in the garden of health and had studied medicine with their father, after the Trojan War imparted medical knowledge, the gift of Asclepius, to all parts of the inhabited world (T. 282, 7; 11; 15). Not only in a vague sense was Asclepius a deified mortal: his life, as everybody admitted, could be exactly dated. The ancients were quite justified, indeed, in assuming that Asclepius, if any of the generally acknowledged deities, was a man-god.

Nevertheless, one will hardly venture to follow their supposition in all

⁴ It is noteworthy that the mythological explanations of Asclepius' deification through the gods (cf. above, p. 75) are partly identical with those offered by the saga for the deification of the other figures with whom Asclepius is paralleled in the euhemeristic argument (Heracles, the Dioscuri, Romulus). Incidentally not only the Christians, but even the Greeks themselves sometimes refrained from calling Asclepius a god at all (T. 249).

⁵ Cf. below, pp. 105 f.

⁶ Pausanias' forced interpretation of the Homer passage (T. 255; cf. below, p. 91, n. 3) indicates the importance which the statement must have had in the ancient discussion of Asclepius' nature.

⁷ Even in late centuries, the two had temples wherever the doors were open for Asclepius; wherever the name of the father was invoked, his sons, too, were commemorated, as Aristides says (T. 282, 21).

its implications. To ascertain the historical reality of the Homeric or of the Hesiodic hero proved impossible. He seemed to be an invention of mythical fantasy, the character of a fairy tale which in eternal symbols expresses the mission of the physician.⁸ Now, if the god was no more than the deified hero, as one is led to believe by the testimony, then historicity cannot be attributed to him either. His human nature can be granted only in the sense that he was one of those saints who through their deeds acquired divine prerogatives.⁹ But this can be asserted: over a long period of history Asclepius, before being elevated to the dignity of a god, had held only the inferior rank of a hero, of the patron of physicians.¹⁰ As such a hero of artisans, who made his way into the pantheon, Asclepius would not be an isolated figure among the Greek deities. Hephaestus, too, was originally the saint of craftsmen.¹¹ If in contrast to Hephaestus Asclepius became a god revered by everybody, this was due to the fact that his task, the healing of diseases, concerned all men. Nor is it astonishing that the greatest divine physician should have come from the realm of secular medicine. In antiquity, unlike modern times, divine healing and human medicine, though strictly separated, were not hostile or in irreconcilable opposition. Moreover, the help expected from Asclepius, though superhuman in range and efficacy, in the opinion of the ancients, was nevertheless rational and fashioned after the human art of medicine.¹²

Yet, for an appreciation of the nature of Asclepius' godhead it is not enough to state that the god was the deified hero. What was the power that he acquired with his new standing? Did he receive the unlimited

⁸ Cf. above, pp. 52 f.; 63 f.

⁹ In this respect, then, I differ from Farnell and all those who believe that the god Asclepius grew out of a real personality. In my opinion the case stands otherwise with the Greek god of medicine than it does with the Egyptian one, Imhotep, with whom Asclepius in late antiquity was identified (T. 331), and who, according to modern research, was a historical figure, cf. K. Sethe, *Imhotep, Unters. z. Gesch. u. Altertums. Aegyptens*, II, 4, 1902; R. S. Forbes, *Proc. of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Sec. of the Hist. of Med., XXXIII, 4, 1940, p. 733; a parallel between Asclepius and Imhotep is drawn e.g. by Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 236. If it were objected that originally all heroes, as all gods for that matter, were human beings, this would introduce into the debate a general philosophical problem which I am not prepared to discuss. I wish to state only this much, that Asclepius cannot be proved to have been a definite historical personality. On the other hand, I need hardly defend the theory proposed against the claim that all ancient heroes originally were gods. This assumption, much favored in the nineteenth century, is now beginning to be discarded; cf. Wilamowitz, *S. B. Berl.*, 1925, p. 62. Some heroes certainly are "decayed gods," but this is by no means true of all of them; cf. in general, Farnell, *Hero Cults*, *passim*.

¹⁰ For the interpretation of the process of Asclepius' deification, cf. below, pp. 91 ff.

¹¹ Cf. Wilamowitz, *G. G. N.*, 1895, pp. 217 ff.; Nilsson, *Griechische Religion*, I, pp. 495 ff.

¹² For an elaboration on these theses, cf. below, pp. 139 f.; 152 ff.

might of the great gods, but in self-restriction choose to heal diseases? Or did he assume from the beginning only one special duty, namely that of tending the sick? Besides, in the world of polytheism, the gods were not equals; they formed a society in which every member had his own rank. What was Asclepius' station?

Even the name Asclepius, as it was understood in antiquity, points to the fact that he was thought of as a god who was in charge of one limited domain. The word *Asclepius*, as all ancient interpreters agreed, was a compound.¹³ Its second part was not difficult to explain: no one doubted that it consisted of the expression *ἥπιος*, *mild* (T. 267). There was a difference of opinion only in so far as the concept of mildness was referred to various subjects, to the gentleness of Asclepius' hands, to his way of healing in general, to his art, or to his character (T. 268 ff.).¹⁴

It is the explanation of the first syllable which proved to be a rather baffling problem. Some people said that Asclepius was originally called *Ἥπιος*, *the Mild*, but was surnamed Asclepius after he had healed Askles, the tyrant of Epidaurus (e.g. T. 273).¹⁵ Older perhaps than this interpretation, though unique, is the claim of Isyllus that Apollo named his son Asclepius after his mother Aigle; for thus Coronis was first called in Epidaurus (T. 594).¹⁶ Both these etymologies apparently were determined by the wish to connect Asclepius as closely as possible with Epidaurus. What better proof could be found for the city's importance in regard to Asclepius than the fact that even his name was derived from

¹³ For such a theory the accentuation of the word provides a difficulty; Demosthenes was quite right in saying *Ἀσκληπίος* instead of *Ἀσκληπιός*, since the name was supposed to be a compound (T. 266). At the same time this testimony proves that the interpretation of the name as a compound was current at least as early as the fourth century B. C. Dialectical modifications of the name are collected in Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1642, 52 ff. Concerning the Latin transcription, cf. T. 267a-b. Asclepius is one of the few Greek gods who even after migrating to Rome kept their Greek names (cf. Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 462; K. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 121, n. 2).

¹⁴ For the importance of the word *ἥπιος*, cf. below, p. 81. It should be noted that the character and the attitude of the god as outlined by the saga (cf. above, pp. 73 f.) are in many respects reminiscent of the ideal physician who is pictured in the Hippocratic *Oath* (C. M. G., I, 1, pp. 4, 18; 5, 1 ff.).

¹⁵ Askles or Askletos (T. 272) is otherwise unknown and may have been invented for etymological purposes. It is interesting to note that this etymology would imply that Asclepius came to Epidaurus at the end of the seventh century B. C.; for at that time the city was under the domination of tyrants; cf. Hiller v. Gaertringen, *I. G.*, IV², 1, p. xi. Yet undoubtedly this is an intentional attempt at archaizing; for the Epidaurian god is much younger, cf. below, p. 98.

¹⁶ It is this etymology that has found favor with Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, pp. 91 ff.; *Glaube*, II, p. 229); it is in fact the corner-stone of his belief that Asclepius is a pre-Hellenic god, in spite of all the qualms which he feels himself ("befremdender Lautwandel," "sehr seltsame Ableitung mit noch seltsamerer Betonung," *Isyllos*, p. 93); cf. below, n. 18.

the Epidaurian legend? Such explanations were hardly anything but tendentious inventions and they were never commonly accepted.¹⁷ In general the ancients did not derive the meaning of the name Asclepius from a combination of the word ἥπιος with a proper noun. Taking as a fact that the second syllable meant mild, they referred the other, ἄσκλη to ἄσκη with the superfluous addition of the λ, thus understanding Asclepius as "the one who gently takes pains with the sick, that is, considers them deserving of watchful care" (T. 272); or they referred it to σκέλλω, *to make harsh*, with an alpha privative, that is "he who by the agency of the medical art does not permit dryness" (T. 269). What are the implications of these etymologies?¹⁸

The explanation of Asclepius as "the one who gently takes pains with the sick" (T. 272) seems to convey the notion that the god exercised his art as, in the opinion of the Greeks, a good physician should do, that is, kindly. Not only was the word ἥπιος always connected with drugs, "the healing hands of the gods," not only does it occur as surname of Apollo, the physician; it was also characteristic of the attitude of the human doctor, and more specifically of the Greek doctor in contrast to the barbarian physician.¹⁹ Mildness and friendliness are inherent qualities of the ideal physician. To be sure, the doctor must sometimes hurt his patient; he must burn or cut, but, just as he does so only in order to help, he is in general the friend of his patient; he is thought to be mild rather than rough, kind rather than harsh or severe.²⁰ The name Ascle-

¹⁷ The obvious Epidaurian tendency of these etymologies has never been pointed out. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 38, n. 3, emphasizes that treatment of eye diseases, as in the case of Askles, was very common among the Epidaurian temple cures. Concerning the importance of such a change of the name in the legend of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ, cf. above, p. 73, n. 21.

¹⁸ I wish to stress that I am not concerned with the correctness of the ancient explanations. I think it necessary, however, to find out their significance, the more so since the fact that the name Asclepius was considered transparent allows of certain conclusions regarding the nature of Asclepius' godhead, as it was understood in antiquity. For modern etymologies, cf. the survey in Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 1, p. 616, 4 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1643, 26 ff.; D. Detschew, *Mitt. Bulg. Arch. Inst.*, III, pp. 131 ff. (Thracian god); cf. P. Kretschmer, *Glotta*, XVI, 1928, p. 193. No agreement has been reached among the modern critics, and the more cautious interpreters believe that the problem has not yet been solved; cf. the most emphatic statement of Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 238: "Now the name 'Asklepios' has hitherto defied all attempts to explain it and remains an unsolved mystery, at least for those who possess a philological conscience." Cf. also Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 305, n. 2.

¹⁹ For the connection of the word ἥπιος with drugs and all aspects of healing, cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 165, n. 49. For the contrast between Egyptian and Greek procedure, cf. Herodotus, III, 130: Ἑλληνικοῖσι λήμασι χρεώμενος καὶ ἥπια μετὰ τὰ λσχυρὰ προσάγων (*sc.*, Democedes). Cf. also T. 355a.

²⁰ Hippocrates (*C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 22, 1 ff.) insists upon the necessity of a mild procedure in surgery; another passage (Hippocrates, V, 308 L.) speaks of αἱ τοῖσι

pius, then, was understood to express a certain standard; it symbolized the ethical demands of the craft which Asclepius represented. Taken as functional, the name delineates him as the prototype of the good doctor.

The other etymology expounded in antiquity is even more revealing. By saying that Asclepius is the one "who makes the harsh in illnesses mild" (T. 271), or "who does not permit dryness" (T. 269), the ancients intimated that Asclepius is the one who, by making the body soft again, "does not allow men to be parched and dried up and mortified by diseases" (T. 271), that is, he gives them their earlier health and lively freshness.²¹ In other words: Asclepius is visualized here as the protector from "the withering that comes with death" (T. 268), from the mortification of the body; he is the one who defers "the cessation which comes with death" (T. 273). To accomplish this feat was the aim of every physician; it was his highest ambition; it was the sum total of his endeavor as an artisan and a scientist, the divine mission of his craft.²² Thus understood Asclepius in providing for the sick what they most needed, help in deadly diseases, in acting as the savior from their most dreaded enemy, death, is again the impersonation of the ideal physician.²³

Whatever the correct etymology of the word Asclepius, the name of the god, the "cult statue of human speech" as Democritus calls it,²⁴ to the ancients had a definite and perspicuous meaning; it reflected the hopes and expectations with which they entered the temples of the deity, it symbolized the perfect application of the medical art, the liberation from utter destruction. If one remembers that those who came to visit the sanctuaries in most cases did not suffer from trifling ailments, but were desperately ill and took refuge in the Asclepieia when given up by human physicians as "hopeless cases,"²⁵ one immediately realizes how appro-

κάμνονσι χάριτες which the specialist in internal medicine should observe; Galen too (XVII B, pp. 145 ff. K.) discusses the topic of kindness at the bedside. Cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, p. 102.

²¹ The Greek etymology was curiously interpreted by the Methodist Caelius Aurelianus in his translation of the works of Soranus into Latin. He claims that Asclepius was the first to cure chronic diseases that are hard to overcome, and that from this accomplishment he received his name (T. 364). But, of course, originally the etymology cannot have referred to any specific healing.

²² Cf. above, p. 45, and especially the Callimachus verses referred to p. 45, n. 81. The etymology proposed by the ancients summarizes the gist of the Asclepius legend.

²³ Cf. also below, p. 112, n. 4. It is well to remember that *σκέλετον* and *σκέλλω* contain the same root and that Hippocrates was said to have dedicated to the god in Delphi *μήμημα χαλκοῦν χρονιωτέρου κατερρηκότος τε ἤδη τὰς σάρκας καὶ τὰ ὀστά ὑπολειπομένου μόνα* (Paus. X, 2, 6). The dedication obviously symbolized Hippocrates' victory over death. For the interpretation of this passage, cf. H. Pomtow, *Klio*, XV, 1918, pp. 306 ff.

²⁴ 68 B 142 [Diels-Kranz]; cf. also M. Warburg, *N. Philol. Unters.*, V, 1929, pp. 72 ff.

²⁵ Cf. below, p. 169.

priate the ancient etymology was in connection with the god's activity. Moreover, it seems most unlikely that a deity, whose name was so definitely connected with medicine and the task of the physician, had at any time been thought of as being more than the incarnation of the divine power of healing.²⁶

The limitation of Asclepius' power is also expressed in the divine appellation usually accorded to him by his worshippers, and in the position which he held in comparison with the more ancient gods. If the sceptics of Cicero's time speak about him as "one of the newly enrolled citizens in heaven" (T. 262), or if Lucian pokes fun at Asclepius as "a naturalized alien" among the gods (T. 264), if some call him "a newcomer to heaven" (T. 263), or designate him as one of those "who are named gods" (T. 262a), all such statements may first of all refer to the fact that he was a late deity who rose to godhead long after the other inhabitants of the pantheon. Besides, these assertions are indicative of the inferior rank of the new god. Even the oldest hymns invariably address Asclepius not as god, but as "daimon" (T. 592 f.). It has been claimed that in poetry the terms *θεός* and *δαίμων* are used interchangeably.²⁷ This may be true in some instances. But the constant use of the word "daimon" in regard to Asclepius can hardly be fortuitous.²⁸ Moreover, in the language of later theology Asclepius, in contradistinction to the full-fledged gods, is unambiguously characterized as "daimon" (T. 260), as demigod, "and it is doubtless through the possession of emotion that the demigod is inferior to the god. For what their natural characteristics were when they dwelt on earth, these they do not desire wholly to relinquish." In the procession of the pre-Christian era As-

²⁶ Even Wilamowitz who believes that the word Asclepius is pre-Greek (cf. above, n. 16) grants "das ἥπιον . . . , das man in seinem Namen hörte" (*Glaube*, II, p. 232). Of the name Asclepius, I think, the same is true as of the words Eleusis or Artemis, concerning which Kern (*Religion*, I, p. 102) says: "Wie die Hellenen bei dem nach moderner Ansicht ursprünglich un griechischen Namen Eleusis zweifelsohne stets die Bedeutung der 'Ankunft' empfunden haben, werden sie auch bei der Namensform Artemis immer an die grosse Schlächterin, die Herrin über alles Getier des Waldes und der Berge, gedacht haben."

²⁷ Cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 1, p. 938, 15 ff. Wilamowitz too, *Glaube*, I, p. 363, n. 2, holds that in some cases the term "daimon" is used only for grammatical reasons.

²⁸ Note also that it was only in the Homeric religion that the concepts of *θεός* and *δαίμων* were not clearly distinguished (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, pp. 362 ff.; II, pp. 15 f.; K. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze*, 1875, pp. 143 ff.). But even here the gods are preferably called "daimones" when they are considered in their active interference in human affairs. Popular opinion at least from the time of Hesiod accepted the belief in "daimones" who were different from the gods (cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 112). This distinction should be valid, therefore, also in the case of the Asclepius hymns, the oldest of which dates from the fourth century B. C. The term *δαίμων* also occurs in T. 595.

clepius like all the other demigods (ἡμίθεοι), who had left their bodies and whose souls had risen to heaven, followed behind the great Olympian gods and received honors similar to those paid to the gods (T. 258). He never became one of the Olympians.²⁹ In fact, he chose for all times to live on earth; he was a fugitive from the regions of the gods, as it were (T. 261).³⁰ He was a terrestrial god rather than one of the Olympians, or one of the celestial deities, or one of the chthonian divinities (T. 259). In short, Asclepius was considered one of those "in-between existences," whom Hesiod calls ἐπιχθόνιοι δαίμονες.³¹ This was appropriate indeed for the son of a divine father and a mortal mother who even after his death continued to heal men in his divine temples, for a divinity who was thought to be in charge of one specific function.

I have now marshalled the evidence concerning the ancients' opinion in regard to Asclepius' nature and dignity. Translated into modern categories it suggests that Asclepius was a "special god," although not one of the genuine gods of this type, for he became a "special god" only after he had been a hero.³² With such a character it is concordant that he should have been regarded a "daimon." "Special gods" being minor deities most frequently were classified in this way.³³ With such a character the name too seems to agree, as it was understood in antiquity.

²⁹ This statement is correct in spite of the fact that Aristides (T. 317, 4) and Quintus (T. 181) speak of Zeus Asclepius or the Olympian Asclepius. Such characterizations, to be found only at the end of antiquity, may be understood in connection with the Neo-Platonic speculation, according to which all gods were emanations of one identical divine power, cf. below, pp. 107 f. Or else they may be superlative forms of worship as they also occurred in the cases of Heracles, Agamemnon, Trophonius (cf. L. Preller, *Griechische Mythologie*, II³, 1875, p. 361, n. 3). At any rate, these expressions do not place Asclepius on the same level with the other Olympians (cf. also Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 223).

³⁰ Here I am borrowing from Origenes who with these words characterizes the activities of all gods who appear to men on earth.

³¹ The importance of this concept in Greek religion has been stressed by M. P. Nilsson, *Gercke-Norden, Einl. in d. Altertumswissenschaft*, II³, 1922, p. 280.

³² The term "special god" ("Sondergott"), which Usener introduced into the interpretation of Greek religion, is foreign to Greek speculation and therefore somewhat dangerous to use. Yet the phenomenon itself, the personification of certain limited powers, is to be found in Greek no less than in Roman religious life. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 11, proceeds much too summarily in rejecting Usener's theory altogether; cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 113 ff., who discusses the pro and con of the question and vindicates the indisputable importance of the concept of "special gods" against undue exaggerations. He says, p. 114: "Echte Sondergötter sind göttliche Gestalten, die lediglich zu dem Zweck geschaffen sind, Schutzheilige einer ganz bestimmten und meist eng begrenzten Naturkraft oder menschlichen Beschäftigung zu sein." From these, Kern distinguishes "die falschen Sondergötter," that is, "die *numina specialia*, die aus Heroen dazu geworden sind." In this differentiation of genuine and non-genuine "special gods" Kern follows G. Wissowa, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur röm. Religions- und Stadtgeschichte*, 1904, pp. 304 ff. Cf. also Nilsson, *Griechische Religion*, I, p. 363.

³³ Cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 247 ff.; 291 ff. Cf. also Eitrem, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Heros, VIII, p. 1112, 49.

A functional name was usual for "special gods."³⁴ Can the suggestion implicit in the testimony reviewed so far be verified by additional arguments?

First of all it is only under the presupposition that Asclepius was a "special god" that the peculiarity of the myth can be fully appreciated. In his divine legend Asclepius is represented as a man-god, and yet how indistinct does he remain as an individual, how dimly is he pictured as a personality compared with other deities of the Greeks and Romans; how barren of facts is the account, how incomparable to the myths attached to other gods of equally high renown.³⁵ The beginning and end of his life, cardinal points on which the exposition of the story and explanation of the god's nature hinge, are clearly marked. What happens in between the boundaries of his earthly existence, however, is left vague and not adorned with the concreteness of a definite setting. As far as his "life" becomes visible at all, it centers on his medical activities, on his achievements as a healer of the sick, a raiser of the dead. If Asclepius was a god, invented or created for the sole purpose of taking care of the province of medicine, it is quite understandable that his myth remained as hazy as that of the hero. The mythological embroidering of such a figure was of necessity restricted, because the original concept of the god was functional and as such demanded certain features and scenes for its elucidation, but they were few indeed. The legend, viewed from this angle, cannot be considered the product of mere chance.³⁶

Even the god's relation to his family now becomes meaningful. Asclepius was surrounded by a divine retinue composed of a number of gods and goddesses. None of them, except Machaon and Podalirius, who were taken over from the Epic,³⁷ are mentioned in the myth; their con-

³⁴ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 238, says: "The original significance, then, of the name Ἀσκληπιός remains unknown; but one cannot help feeling that it has more the fashion and sound of a personal-human than of a divine name." This feeling, at any rate, is not that of the Greeks, as is evidenced by the ancient etymologies which Farnell does not discuss at all. When on the other hand he claims that a functional name is typical of a chthonian god (*ibid.*, p. 239), he does not take into account the "special gods," of whom the same can be said; cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 115.

³⁵ Cf. above, pp. 73 f.

³⁶ Wilamowitz seems to be the only one to have noticed the peculiarity of the Asclepius myth, but he explains it quite differently (*Isyllos*, p. 103): "... er ist zu spät in die Reihen der Götter getreten, zu denen die edelsten der hellenischen Volkstämme beteten, als dass Dichter sein göttliches Wirken und Walten so verschönt hätten, wie sie es an Apollon oder Athene getan haben, denen er freilich auch an innerem Gehalte nicht zu vergleichen ist." Yet, the phenomenon in question is rather the typical one in connection with "special gods," cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, esp. pp. 330 f., also p. 304 (Helios as contrasted with Apollo); pp. 314 f. (Uranos).

³⁷ Cf. above, p. 78, where it has also been shown that Machaon and Podalirius were

nection with Asclepius is in no way elaborated. All his divine children as well as his divine wife are personifications of abstract concepts, of medical functions, a fact recognized by ancient and modern critics alike.³⁸ Asclepius was indeed a god who took charge of medicine alone; even his family followed his calling.

One must go still farther. The association with these deities had a special significance for Asclepius. To have a family, for him, was more important than it was for most other deities.³⁹ When the Athenian peasants invoked Asclepius, they called him "Sire in his offspring blest" (T. 277). The hymns carefully enumerated all the sons and daughters of the god; they asked them to appear and to lend their help (T. 592-93). Obviously the father, the mother and their offspring, in the eyes of the worshippers, were a unity. It is not by accident that Aristophanes, when picturing one of the cures of Asclepius, made him perform his task supported by his daughters (T. 421, *vv.* 701-02). Rather is it true that the god of medicine, at least at the beginning of his divine practice, rarely acted without his children;⁴⁰ they were part of his own nature, as it were. What does this fact mean in regard to the character of Asclepius' godhead?

Not much can be concluded from his constant association with Epione, who from the end of the fifth century B. C. was generally considered his wife. Her name is derived from the word ἥπιος, *mild*, the same root that all the ancients found in the name of Asclepius himself; she is nothing but the personification of mildness, as the testimonies assert (T. 281).⁴¹ There is no word about her origin, no tale concerning her marriage to Asclepius; nor is it ever told where and when she gave birth to her children.⁴² Epione lives only in her union with her divine husband; she

considered physicians. Here, I am concerned only with those members of Asclepius' family who were associated with him when he became a god.

³⁸ Cf. *e. g.* T. 278, and Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1656, 62 ff.; Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 163 ff.

³⁹ The only gods comparable to Asclepius in this respect seem to be Ares and Aphrodite. Cf. below, n. 49.

⁴⁰ The early monuments, too, picture Asclepius with one or another of his children assisting him; cf. *e. g.* the relief made around 405 B. C., now in the Piraeus Museum (L. Curtius, *Die antike Kunst*, II, *Handb. d. Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 236). The great temple inscriptions of Epidaurus (T. 423), dating from the second half of the fourth century, naturally put the emphasis on the work performed by the god alone. But even in the third century another Epidaurian inscription (T. 431) is dedicated to the god and his children. Cf. also below, p. 102, n. 4.

⁴¹ This etymology is also accepted by modern scholars, cf. *e. g.* Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 165; Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 311; as for Asclepius and the importance of the term ἥπιος in medicine, cf. above, n. 19.

⁴² Once Epione is called the daughter of Merops (T. 281b), the hero of Cos (cf.

is the woman whom Asclepius needs so that he may have offspring. Apparently she is a mere double of the god.⁴³

It stands differently with Asclepius' and Epione's children. In addition to Machaon and Podalirius, there were Aceso, Iaso, Panacea, Hygieia and Aegle. At any rate from the fourth century on, when they are mentioned in the hymns (T. 592), they constituted the divine family of Asclepius and were recognized everywhere.⁴⁴ Among them the iatric children,

Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, II, p. 562, n. 2; Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Epione, VI, p. 187, 41 ff., reads *Μερονίς* instead of *Μέροπος*, thus making Epione a Coan by birth; in the Hippocratic legend she is called the daughter of Heracles (T. 281a). Both versions apparently are Coan transformations of the saga (Heracles was famous in Cos, cf. Thraemer, *loc. cit.*; for the Coan origin of the Hippocrates legend, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Supplement VI, pp. 1301, 26 ff.). Since the Coan Asclepius, according to the recent excavations, is very late (cf. below, p. 243), these genealogies cannot be considered original (contrary to Thraemer, *loc. cit.*, p. 189, 3 ff.). At any rate, the tradition is purely local and has never had any general significance. Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 163, suggests the Epidaurian origin of Epione; this can neither be proved nor disproved.

⁴³ It should be remembered that Epione, though uncontested in the cult, is not the only wife of Asclepius mentioned by tradition. One testimony, the oldest one that speaks about Asclepius' family, names her *Lampetia*, the daughter of Helios (T. 281c); she may have had some connection with Rhodes where Helios was the most important god (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 116) and where an old family of Asclepiads existed (thus Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1656, 38 ff.); or *Lampetia* may have been given as the name of his wife because of the importance of the sun for the healing of diseases, or because the light of day represented health and life (cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 178), or because the Heliads were symbols of knowledge (cf. Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 433); Asclepius' wisdom is often stressed (*e.g.*, T. 593). One other source names *Hipponoë* as the wife of Asclepius (T. 281f). She is probably one of the Nereids (Hesiod, *Theog.*, 251; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1656, 48), but is otherwise unknown; she may have been connected with Asclepius because of the healing power of wells and rivers (cf. Preller-Robert, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 547; 551; concerning wells in the Asclepieia, cf. below, p. 237). The Orphics gave to Asclepius as his wife *Hygieia* (T. 281e); concerning her, cf. below, pp. 89 f. These are all the women ever named as mother of all the children of Asclepius, none of them being universally recognized. Machaon's mother, in the Messenian legend, is *Xanthe* (T. 281d, cf. above, p. 32, n. 36), perhaps the daughter of Oceanus and Thetys (Hesiod, *Theog.*, 356)—she again would point to the influence of water on healing. That Arsinoë and Coronis (in T. 169) are mentioned as Asclepius' wives only by mistake, has been shown by Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 49, n. 12. Aristodama is the mother of the Sicyonian hero Aratus (T. 281g; cf. T. 288).

⁴⁴ Some of the ancients added *Ianiscus* and *Alexenor* (T. 279). But they were at no time generally accepted in the cult; cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 170, n. 61. *Ianiscus* originally came from Attica and was king of Sicyon. As such he probably received heroic worship after his death, but was later superseded by Asclepius, a fact which is reflected in the local tradition that he was the son of the god of medicine (cf. Pausanias, II, 6, 6). Usener, *op. cit.*, p. 170, connects the name Ianiscus with Ion, the healer; cf. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie*, p. 739, 7. *Alexenor* apparently is the Alexanor honored at Titane (T. 188) who was thought to have founded the Asclepius temple at that place (T. 187). There is hardly any doubt that Alexanor was made the son of Asclepius when he was superseded by Asclepius, just as Machaon had once ousted Alexanor and had adopted him as his son; cf. above, p. 21. Alexanor is "der den Männern Helfende, Abwehr Bringende," Usener, *op. cit.*, p. 170. At any rate, Ianiscus and Alexanor are local deities, connected with Asclepius only in the tradition of certain sanctuaries; they are no genuine members of his divine retinue. Another local variation is the Coan claim that *Epīo* was a daughter of Asclepius (T. 482, v. 6); cf. Usener,

Aceso, Iaso, and Panacea are clearly personifications of functions. As indicated by their names, they represent the healing power itself.⁴⁵ When and where they became connected with Asclepius one cannot decide with certainty. Aceso is always referred to as daughter of Asclepius. She may have originated in Epidaurus.⁴⁶ Iaso even in the fifth century B. C. appears also as the child of Amphiaraus (T. 285). She is, then, a healing spirit in her own right, originally associated with various gods, but finally fixed in the Asclepius family.⁴⁷ The same is true of Panacea, the "universal remedy." She too originally was an independent goddess and was linked together with the god of medicine only later.⁴⁸

For what reasons were these figures believed to be the children of Asclepius? Were they thought of as hypostases of his power? In that case it would be difficult to understand why they never made use of their own faculties, why they never undertook to heal by themselves. Nor would it be meaningful under this presupposition that the god acted in unison with them. As emanations of his own strength they would be mere shadows of their father. The close cooperation between Asclepius and his iatric daughters in the beginning of his career seems to indicate that his children were not hypostases of his nature but rather an enlargement upon it, and such a relationship is well in accord with Asclepius' position. Since originally he was only a hero, it was necessary that as a newly

op. cit., p. 165; that Epio is identical with Epione, as suggested in Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1656, 53, cannot be proved. As regards Acesis, Euamerion, and Telesphorus, cf. below, n. 50.

⁴⁵ In the oldest hymn to Asclepius, Aceso is not mentioned (T. 592), while her name appears in a later copy of the hymn (T. 592a) and in the hymn of Macedonius (T. 593). On the other hand, she is referred to in a sacrificial ritual of the fourth century B. C. (T. 515). Generally speaking one has the impression that she was somewhat neglected and less important than her sisters (cf. Wilamowitz, *Griech. Verskunst*, 1921, p. 353, n. 3, who explains the epithet *πολύλιτος* in T. 593 as "Entschädigung für frühere Übergehung"). Maybe in certain cases she was omitted because she was identical with Iaso, as Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 165, suggests. It is noteworthy that the Athenians apparently were not very fond of Aceso: no ship was named after her, whereas Iaso, Panacea, and Hygieia occur as names of Athenian ships; cf. Kutsch, *Attische Heilgötter*, p. 33.

⁴⁶ Nothing is known about Aceso except her relation to Asclepius. Names similar to hers in connection with medicine have been collected by Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 158 f.; 164. An Epidaurian descent seems indicated by the fact that a god Acesis was worshipped there later; cf. below, n. 50.

⁴⁷ Concerning Iaso in general, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Iaso, IX, p. 758.

⁴⁸ Concerning Panacea (T. 284), cf. Thraemer, Roscher, *Lexikon*, *s.v.* Panakeia, III, 1, pp. 1482 ff.; here the centers of her cult and her possibly Rhodian origin are discussed. In the temple of Amphiaraus she had an altar like Iaso, Amphiaraus' daughter (cf. Pausanias, I, 34, 3). Thraemer, *E.R.E.*, VI, p. 551, says rightly that she is "the outstanding iatric figure of the group . . . a personification of the popular notion of the miraculous all-healing herbs already mentioned in connection with Cheiron and Herakles. . . . In the ancient oath of the physicians she alone—as a healer—is contrasted with Hygieia."

created special god he should possess the divine "healing power" and the "universal remedy."⁴⁹ Iaso, Aceso, and Panacea symbolized this extension and intensification of the might of the hero of old. That is why they accompanied their father, as the apprentices accompanied the human doctor. Later, when people had become accustomed to the fact that Asclepius, the god, was ever-present in his temples, his descendants were gradually forgotten. Asclepius alone, then, represented the healing power; in fact he finally presided over other minor deities who mediated between him and men.⁵⁰

That the connection between the god and his children originally signified an extension of his power is most clearly brought out by another instance, his unchanging association with Hygieia. She is the one daughter who is "worth as much as all the others" (T. 282, 22) and later she precedes all her brothers and sisters; sometimes she is even called the wife of Asclepius (T. 601). She seems to have been connected with the god around 400 B. C., for she is not mentioned in the oldest testimony about Asclepius' family which dates from the middle of the fifth century B. C.⁵¹

⁴⁹ In the same way, I think, the fact that Iaso is connected with Amphiaraus must be explained. Originally he was a warrior and seer; his daughter Iaso signifies that he had become a healer. Or again, Ares, "the one who does damage" (cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 118), according to literary as well as archaeological testimonies, is surrounded by a number of deities, sometimes called his children, by Fear and Terror, and others, personifications which apparently complement the original concept of this "special god" (cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 120 f.); the retinue of Aphrodite also consists of personifications that enlarge on the goddess' own power.

⁵⁰ Cf. below, n. 54. *Euamerion*, *Acesis* and *Telesphorus* are usually counted among the children of Asclepius (cf. e. g. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1656, 62 ff.; Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 170-71, judges differently). However, *Telesphorus* is the only one who in ancient tradition is once expressly referred to as son of Asclepius on an inscription (T. 287; cf. F. Schwenn, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. *Telesphorus*, V(2), p. 389, 30 ff.). The three who are attested only in late centuries seem to have been but one deity, worshipped under different names in different temples. *Euamerion* is known only from Pausanias (T. 749). Venerated at Titane in the temple of Asclepius along with many other deities he was an originally independent healing deity with a functional name, probably meaning "the giver of good and healthy days" (cf. Usener, *op. cit.*, p. 170; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 472, n. 1). According to Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 739, the name indicates that Asclepius himself was *ἡμερος* (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, VI, p. 838, 18 ff.). *Telesphorus*, created perhaps at Pergamum and later adopted also by other cities (cf. Schwenn, *loc. cit.*, p. 387, 39 ff.; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 471, without reasons and against Pausanias' express statement [T. 749] claims *Telesphorus* for Epidaurus), was a god in his own right, he too a "special god" (Usener, *op. cit.*, p. 171: "der die Heilung bringende Gott"; Boeckh, however, according to Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 740, connected the name with *τελεταί*, a not improbable interpretation in view of the late mysteries; cf. below, p. 213, n. 21). Of *Acesis* nothing is known except his name, which apparently is functional, and the fact that he was worshipped at Epidaurus (T. 749; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. *Akesis*, I, p. 1164). Since he was identical with the other two, as Pausanias says, he too must have been an independent deity, an inferior healing god, later related to Asclepius, the supreme medical divinity.

⁵¹ That Hygieia is an Athenian creation has been suggested by Usener, *Götternamen*,

Why was she associated with the god? Asclepius, certainly from the fourth century B. C., was venerated not only as the healer of diseases but also as the giver and preserver of health, as the hymns written in his honor clearly show. The worship paid to him by the inhabitants of whole cities at regular intervals, by those who enjoyed perfect health, was directed toward the god who keeps men healthy rather than toward him who restores them to health.⁵² The twofold activity which was thus attributed to the god reflects the twofold activity of the human physician who was supposed to take care not only of the sick, but of the healthy as well; health no less than disease, in the opinion of these generations, required medical supervision.⁵³ The god of medicine, the deified physician, therefore, was obliged likewise to take care of both health and sickness. Since originally he had been only a healer of diseases, a savior from deadly illness, Hygieia was made his daughter, and he retained her as his associate. Only in this way could the concept of the perserver of health become part of his own godhead.⁵⁴

p. 167; his theory is upheld and supported with additional arguments by Tambornino, Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Hygieia, IX, pp. 93 ff. Thraemer, Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 2, p. 2776, maintains that Hygieia is an emanation of Asclepius and had her origin at Titane, although she was worshipped in Epidaurus at a relatively early time; cf. *E.R.E.*, VI, p. 551. Yet Thraemer's reasoning is not conclusive and does not disprove Usener's thesis. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 223 f., is satisfied with stating that she too, of course, came from Epidaurus. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 260, assumes that Hygieia was connected with Asclepius in Athens, though he renounces his earlier opinion (*Cults*, I, pp. 316 ff.) that she arose as an emanation of Athena Hygieia. Cf. also K. Neugebauer, *Die Hygieia von Athen, Forschungen u. Fortschritte*, X, 1936, pp. 109 ff.

⁵² Cf. below, p. 102.

⁵³ Wilamowitz' opinion that "die Gesundheit . . . den Arzt überflüssig macht" (*Glaube*, II, p. 224, n. 1) is erroneous. Concerning the importance of the dietetics prescribed for the healthy, cf. L. Edelstein, *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, pp. 255 ff. Human physicians were instigated by the belief that health is a balance of humors and activities which is always disturbed and therefore has to be restored constantly. This concept finally led to a division of the medical art into two branches: medicine proper and dietetics. Concerning the influence of the ideal of health on the Asclepius cult, cf. below, pp. 122 f.

⁵⁴ Hygieia, I take it, superseded Aegle who is called the youngest of Asclepius' children in an enumeration of the fifth century B. C. which does not yet know of Hygieia (T. 279). That Aegle was added later is obvious from the testimony itself; that she was added as symbol of health before the reception of Hygieia is at least probable. Aegle, who is mentioned only in connection with Asclepius, is a goddess of light, as her name indicates; cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 164-65. As such she may personify the light of day which the Asclepius worshippers asked him to let them see forever when invoking him as the giver of health in solemn prayer (T. 592). For the connection between light and health, cf. above, n. 43. Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1657, 50 ff., also places Hygieia and Aegle on the same level. On the other hand, one must admit that as goddess of light Aegle may also symbolize Asclepius' wisdom; cf. again above, n. 43. That Asclepius' mother is called Aigle by the Epidaurian Isyllus seems to indicate that the name Aegle had an Epidaurian connotation; cf. Usener, *op. cit.*, p. 164, and Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 2, pp. 2776, 20 ff., where reference is made to Asclepius Ἀιγλήρη (T. 623).

To sum up: the god Asclepius is surrounded by a number of other gods and goddesses who are personifications of abstract concepts or symbols of the medical art. No myth which would transpose them into a more personal existence is attached to any of these members of his family, nor is their connection with the god elaborated by mythological fancy; it is a purely abstract relation that exists between them. Just as the god is the embodiment of the ideal physician, so are his children representations of the various aspects of medicine. Moreover, the myth attached to Asclepius himself is indistinct; his name, in the opinion of the ancients, was functional. All these features point to the hypothesis that Asclepius was a "special god," created by men to be in charge of one task alone, that of healing.

3. TIME AND PLACE OF ASCLEPIUS' DEIFICATION

Now that the nature of Asclepius' godhead has been evaluated, the question remains where and at what time the god of medicine was first admitted to the Greek pantheon. Of course, such a problem cannot be decided with certainty, but it should be possible on the basis of the known data to ferret out the place from which the god originated and to suggest an approximate date of his deification.

The ancients themselves, agreeing as they did that Asclepius had been elevated to the rank of a deity either by the gods or by his human admirers, had very definite opinions at least concerning the time at which his deification had taken place. Those who believed that he had ascended to heaven immediately upon his death computed that he had become a god shortly before the Trojan War. Some gave as the precise date the year 1237 B. C. and held Asclepius' apotheosis to be contemporaneous with that of Heracles (T. 129).¹ Others made Asclepius the senior of Heracles in his elevation to heaven (T. 265).² A few authorities were less explicit. They simply maintained that Asclepius had been a god already in the time of Homer (T. 255).³ Those, on the other hand, who

¹ For the interpretation of T. 129, cf. above, p. 3, n. 3.

² As a curiosity it should be noted that according to one Christian writer Asclepius proclaimed himself god during his lifetime (T. 8). This statement is perhaps made in analogy to what was reported about the physician Menecrates who styled himself Zeus (Athenaeus, VII, 289a ff.). But Empedocles too (*Fr.* 112 [Diels-Kranz]) had spoken of himself as a god. There may have been many variations concerning the time of Asclepius' apotheosis, depending on the lifetime ascribed to him, cf. above, pp. 2 f. The Christian Fathers, in their wish to prove that the Jewish Prophets were older than the Greek sages and gods and that consequently Asclepius was of a very recent date, put him long after Moses (T. 130 ff.).

³ Pausanias (T. 255) quotes *Iliad*, IV (T. 164) and takes the words *φῶτ' Ἀσκληπιοῦ υἱόν* as meaning "mortal son of Asclepius," thus implying that the father was divine.

saw in Asclepius' deification the work of men, naturally allowed some decades, if not centuries to have elapsed in which his reputation could gradually spread and the greatness of his deeds could become apparent to all, until eventually men began to revere him as a deity. Thus Apollodorus insisted that in Homer's time Asclepius was not yet recognized as a god and that he was regarded as such only afterwards (T. 257).⁴ It seems that the adherents of such a theory did not try to define more precisely the period in which Asclepius became a god. The testimonies preserved, at least, furnish no data in this respect.

Modern scholars, as far as they believe that Asclepius was an aboriginal deity, have no reason to discuss the date of his elevation to godhead. For them, the problem is rather when the god Asclepius came to be known to all Greeks.⁵ The few, however, who admit that Asclepius became a god only after having first been a hero, and who consequently must face the issue of his deification, are very vague in their pronouncements in regard to the manner in which this deification was brought about, and to the time at which it took place. It is held that the divine worship goes back to prehistoric centuries, that most likely it originated in Thessaly.⁶ Moreover, some interpreters maintain that the Asclepius who was elevated to godhead was a healing hero bound to the earth in which he was buried and helping those who came to his tomb. Others speak of him as a hero who was believed to be dwelling at a certain place to which he had been removed as an immortal spirit while still alive, and where he took care of the sick.⁷

This interpretation undoubtedly is erroneous (cf. Leaf's commentary *ad Iliadem*, IV, 194; II, 729). Interestingly enough, Pausanias omits the words ἀνύμωτος ἰσθῆρος (T. 164, v. 194); the epithet ἀνύμωτος is given by Homer only to mortals (cf. above, p. 3, n. 6). That Pausanias cannot have intended to claim original divinity for Asclepius has been suggested above, p. 77, n. 1. The word θεός used by him and also in a similar statement of Galen (T. 245), in late centuries could well be applied to "human" gods. Even the Athenians of the fourth century had no qualms in addressing Demetrius Poliorcetes as θεός (Athenaeus, VI, 253 d). Jacoby, *F. Gr. H.*, II, Kommentar, p. 773, 35, asserts that Pausanias, or rather his authority, was not familiar with any attempt to prove from Homer that Asclepius was mortal. This assumption he seems to make because he thinks that Pausanias' account is derived from a source older than Apollodorus. But this is hardly correct, for Pausanias' version is late, cf. above, p. 73, n. 21. Granted even that Pausanias should have copied a third-century writer (Ister), it does not seem likely that Apollodorus (T. 257) was the first to make use of Homer's testimony in order to show that Asclepius was a human being. The euhemeristic interpretation is much older, cf. e. g. T. 243.

⁴ Note that Apollodorus quotes the words which Pausanias omitted, cf. previous note.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 66.

⁶ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 247 ff.

⁷ Rohde, *Psyche*, I, pp. 159 ff., was the first to emphasize the difference between those genuine heroes for whose worship a tomb is an indispensable prerequisite (cf. Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 18-19; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 12; Roscher, *Lexikon*, s. v.

To disregard for the moment the chronological and regional argumentation, is it permissible to assume that the hero Asclepius was a healer of diseases? The analysis of the testimonies has shown that he was the hero of physicians, the patron of their craft. Is there any evidence that he ever had any other function or capacity? As for the first claim that there was an Asclepius whose tomb was approached by the sick, such a grave was not known in early centuries. According to the ancient legend, the hero Asclepius met death, yet his burial place was not mentioned.⁸ The few late testimonies that refer to the grave of the Arcadian Asclepius do not concern the son of Apollo and Coronis who became a god. If the Christians speak of the tomb of the Epidaurian Asclepius, one can understand this assertion only as the usual attempt to prove that the heathen deities were but mortals.⁹ Otherwise tradition is silent about the burial place of Asclepius. One must conclude, therefore, that Asclepius was never worshipped in the typical fashion of a healing hero, enshrined in his tomb.¹⁰

Nor is it possible to suppose that Asclepius, like Amphiaraus or Trophonius, with whom he is often compared, was believed to have been removed from human sight, and to live at a certain place where he was healing. Nothing indicates that the ancients ever thought that Asclepius had not actually died but had disappeared while still alive. Nay, the death of the hero is an essential feature of the Asclepius saga; it forms the climax of the legend.¹¹ Asclepius, then, in spite of all the traits which in

Heros, I, 2, pp. 2482 ff.) and those "pseudo heroes" who were originally thought to have been removed from sight, but were later ranked among the common heroes.

⁸ Cf. above, p. 50.

⁹ Cf. T. 118 f., and above, p. 50, n. 96. One of the well known enumerations by Christian writers of the graves of pagan gods is given *e.g.* in T. 117. I should also stress the fact that Epidaurus is referred to only in Ps. Clementine treatises, while Clement himself speaks of the tomb in Cynosura (T. 101), although it is true, he identifies the hero there buried with the son of Coronis. Incidentally, it is not certain even of the Arcadian Asclepius that he was a healing hero.

¹⁰ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 12, says: "Die Kranken werden sich an dem Grabe [*sc.* of the heroes] zum Schläfe niedergelegt und den Heros im Traume oder auch *ὑπάρ* gesehen und gehört haben, wie später den Asklepios, der zwar kein Grab hatte, aber auch gestorben war." This rather cryptic statement can hardly invalidate the reasoning that Asclepius, if he had no grave, could not be worshipped in the same way as those who were revered at their tombs. Later, however, Wilamowitz says (*op. cit.*, p. 231): "Dann hatten Heroen aus ihren Gräbern aufsteigend die Schlafenden beraten, Amphiaraus z. B.; es kann sehr wohl sein, dass Asklepios in Tricca es als Heros ebenso getan hat, der pythische Gott durch den Dichter der Eöe ihn zurückwies." This, as Wilamowitz admits, is a mere hypothesis, and not a probable one according to the testimonies; the judgment about the intention of the *Eöe* is certainly not correct.

¹¹ Rohde who likens Asclepius to such gods as Amphiaraus (*Psyche*, I, pp. 141 ff.; cf. also Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 95; 101) tries to prove (*op. cit.*, p. 320) that from the beginning Asclepius' death through Zeus' thunderbolt meant nothing else but his ele-

regard to his healing power he may have had in common with Amphiaraus or Trophonius, cannot be compared with them in respect to his original character. Just as he was not one of the healing heroes, he was not one of the removed heroes either.

This result is confirmed by one consideration which vitally affects the two theories under discussion: Asclepius came to be a god who was worshipped throughout the ancient world. Had he ever been restricted to his tomb or to a certain dwelling place, why and how should he, and he alone, eventually have become separated from his regional fixation? None of those who were revered at their graves ever found worship in foreign cities or countries. The ancients, too, noticed certain similarities between Amphiaraus and Trophonius on the one hand, and Asclepius on the other, but they rightly insisted on the difference that Asclepius was revered everywhere, whereas the other two were restricted to certain localities (T. 254; cf. also T. 282, 21).¹² It seems safe to say: if Asclepius had been a healing hero or a removed god, he could not have become the deity that he was later on. Apart from all the other objections furnished by the evidence preserved, the simple fact of Asclepius' mobility militates against the modern views.¹³

Any solution of the problem of Asclepius' deification, then, has to start from the supposition that the hero Asclepius was nothing but the patron of physicians. With such a thesis it is consistent that Asclepius had no grave. The hero worship, paid to him by his fellow craftsmen, did not center around a tomb, it was not fixed at a certain locality. The ancient doctors were strolling craftsmen, travelling from one place to another; they could not revere their hero where he was buried; they prayed to him wherever they were practicing.¹⁴ Moreover, Asclepius' function as the hero of physicians implies that he himself had no concern with the sick. He was thought to be the protector of the physicians; he was invoked by them to guard their daily welfare. They may also have asked

vation to godhead. That this is not the meaning of the original legend has been shown above, pp. 50 f.

¹² The cult of Amphiaraus, to be sure, was transferred to one other region, but the legends concerning his dwelling place varied accordingly; it became a matter of debate where his removal had actually taken place; cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Amphiaraus, I, 1, pp. 298, 52 ff. Needless to say, there was no difference of opinion concerning the place of Asclepius' removal: there were no reports concerning his disappearance.

¹³ Rohde, *Psyche*, I, p. 121, n. 1, admits that under the presupposition that Asclepius was a removed hero or god the later development of the cult would be singular. For even granted that Machaon and Podalirius, his only parallels, were removed heroes, their worship in late antiquity cannot be separated from that of Asclepius.

¹⁴ For ancient physicians as wandering craftsmen, cf. above, p. 60. On the worship paid to heroes of other crafts, e.g. Homer or Daedalus, cf. in general Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Heros, I, 2, pp. 2474 ff.

his support for their difficult task, but it was they who healed the patients, while their hero, leading a vague and shadowy existence in a Beyond that men could not penetrate, did not himself heal or perform miracles. He had no supernatural healing gifts to carry over into his new status as a deity, he did not continue his work only on a higher level, as it were, or in a different form. Although at one time he had been a physician on this earth, his divine power of healing he must have acquired through his deification. Not only did the hero of physicians grow in dignity, he also gained in capacity.

Now there are two factors which must be regarded as ferments that instigated a development which finally brought about the complete reversal of the old concept of the hero Asclepius. The first is the fact that gradually a general change of thought took place with regard to the valuation of hero cults. When the hero Asclepius was first created, heroization was the form in which men expressed their reverence for those whom they considered great and whom they regarded as their benefactors. The Homeric and post-Homeric centuries had no higher honor to bestow than that of a hero. Later, however, the dignity of the hero began to lose importance. Men of ever so small merit were heroized after their death.¹⁵ On the other hand, the belief that great individuals, persons of singular achievements, were able to attain godhead gradually gained momentum. The barriers between god and man became less distinct.¹⁶ Under these circumstances it is not astonishing that Asclepius, the hero of physicians, should have tended to become a god. The only presupposition necessary for such a change in his status was that his accomplishments were considered highly important. Of course, the patron of the cooks, the saint of the heralds were not deified. But the patrons of other arts were elevated to godhead. Homer, the son of a god, as the later saga has it, was himself made a god, because poetry is such a great achievement.¹⁷ The same is true of medicine. The author of the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* states that the invention of the medical art must rightly be attributed to a god because it involves so much skill, and he adds that this is indeed generally done.¹⁸ Thus Asclepius in the course of time was bound to be regarded a god, not merely a hero.

¹⁵ Cf. in general Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 8 ff. In Hellenistic times the word hero no longer carried any distinction, the term "the heroes" eventually came to be an equivalent of "the dead"; cf. Wilamowitz, *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Cf. in general O. Weinreich, *Antikes Gottmenschen-tum*, *N. Jahrb.*, II, 1926, pp. 633 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 111 ff.

¹⁷ Homer was considered the son of a god as early as in the sixth century, cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 31.

¹⁸ Cf. Hippocrates, *C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 45, 16 ff. This writer, who believes that medical

On the other hand, it is quite plausible that the hero of physicians soon found worship even outside the circle of doctors. It was customary for the ancients to pay heroic or divine honors to those who were credited with the invention of medicine. The various Greek tribes revered various such figures: in Magnesia, Chiron was worshipped by all the inhabitants of that country as the one who had first practiced the medical art; in Tyrus, the same achievement was attributed to Agenoridas who accordingly was revered as a hero.¹⁹ That Asclepius, too, in the same capacity was venerated in certain sections of Greece is indicated at least by one testimony. The people of Tithorea are said to have honored the Asclepius Archegetes, and it is added that all the Phocians concurred with them in paying tribute to this particular Asclepius (T. 719). The epithet Archegetes can hardly mean anything except that Asclepius, the hero or the god, was revered as the leader of medicine and in Phocis had the same position which Chiron had in Magnesia.²⁰ The Arcadian Asclepius, however distantly related to the son of Apollo, was likewise praised for

knowledge is the product of right reasoning and observation (*ibid.*, p. 39, 6 ff.), evidently means one of those human beings whose superior wisdom made them equals of the gods.

¹⁹ Cf. Plutarch, *Conv.*, III, 1, 3 (647a). Compare also the hero worship paid to Hippocrates by all Coans (Soranus, *C. M. G.*, IV, 1929, p. 175, 14 f.). The names of Chiron and Agenoridas are the only ones preserved by tradition. Yet it is probable that there were many more such figures. Perhaps the *ἥρως ἰατρὸς*, who in many Greek cities was revered as helper in diseases (cf. Usener, *Götternamen*, pp. 147 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 317 f.), was also believed to have been the first to practice medicine, at least at the particular place where he was venerated. Nilsson, *Griechische Religion*, I, p. 507, rightly points out that in all matters connected with medicine people preferred to have recourse to local deities.

²⁰ The interpretation of "Archegetes" as "founder or leader of medicine" was first proposed by J. Rosenbaum, in K. Sprengel, *Versuch einer pragmatischen Geschichte d. Heilkunde*, I, 1846, p. 148, who as proof referred to Diodorus' characterization of Asclepius (T. 355) as *ἀρχηγός (τῆς ἰατρικῆς) καὶ κτίστης*; cf. also T. 341. Usually the Asclepius Archegetes is understood as the tribal god of the Phocians, and Farnell (*Hero Cults*, p. 247) even claims that the epithet "Archegetes" in Greek religion was attached only "to god or hero who by some received tradition was accepted as the ancestor of the tribe or stock or who was the leader and settler of the colony either actually or in the popular belief." This is certainly not correct. Archegetes may be any founder or leader of a family; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* *Ἀρχηγέτης*, II, p. 441, 37 ff. Similar to the term Asclepius Archegetes seem such expressions as *Διόνυσος ἀρχηγέτης* and *Διόνυσος καθηγμένων* (with reference to the god as leader of the actors; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 375; Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 697, n. 4), or *ἀρχηγέτης τῶν μυστηρίων* (with reference to the genius of Demeter; Strabo, X, 468). Apollo too is called *ἀρχηγός* as well as *ἀρχηγέτης τῆς φιλοσοφίας* (Julian, *Oratio* VI, 188 a-b). Note moreover that no other testimony indicates a tribal function of Asclepius (cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 307), and that according to Pausanias, who mentions the Asclepius Archegetes, the ancestral hero of the Phocians, worshipped by the whole tribe, was Xanthippus or Phocus (X, 4, 10). It may also be of some importance that in Phocis Pausanias saw a statue which some believed to be that of Asclepius, others that of Prometheus (T. 671). Asclepius must have been represented in some way similar to that other culture hero, cf. below, p. 214, n. 2.

his medical inventions (T. 379), and not even the Epidaurians had forgotten that their great healer was also the discoverer of many medical improvements (T. 7). Thus it is likely that the patron of physicians came to have also a regional worship in certain provinces of Greece, that his cult was no longer restricted to the craft alone.²¹

Everything, then, pointed in the direction of Asclepius' becoming a god and being worshipped by the people at large. There was an inner tendency toward his elevation to the god of medicine. Yet, the saint of the craftsmen, even the Asclepius Archegetes, was still not the deity who was revered in Epidaurus, in Tricca, finally everywhere.²² The latent power of the Asclepius figure needed actualization. Where and when was Asclepius, the god of medicine, created? What was it that eventually brought about a complete change in the position of the hero of old?

As for the place from which the god came—and this in ancient terminology is equivalent to his first place of worship—only two cities can enter into serious competition: Tricca and Epidaurus. The opinion of the testimonies is divided. Common belief was in favor of the Epidaurian origin of the god, while ancient scholars advocated Tricca as his birth-place. His oldest sanctuary was supposed to have been in Tricca (T. 714).²³

In spite of the latter assertions which certainly cannot be dismissed lightly, it seems that Epidaurus' rights are better founded. The diffusion of the Asclepius cult is closely connected with the temple of Epidaurus and the god, as he was revered later, is the Epidaurian rather than the Triccean Asclepius.²⁴ Moreover, there is one other fact which indicates that Epidaurus must have had some importance for Asclepius which no other city had. Delphi approved of the Epidaurian claim that Epidaurus

²¹ The Phocian worship of Asclepius Archegetes cannot be dated with certainty. But it is probable that it goes back at least to the sixth century B. C. For Pherecydes claims that Asclepius practiced and died in Delphi (cf. above, p. 50, n. 95). This statement sounds like the rationalization of an older Phocian saga, and certainly not of a saga celebrating the settler of a colony or a tribal god and hero. Pherecydes may well have known of the Asclepius Archegetes and may have been influenced in his account of the hero Asclepius by the myth attached to the Phocian hero, just as Apollodorus (T. 5) in his report on Asclepius' practice in Tricca and Epidaurus obviously is influenced by the divine myth. The Phocian worship, then, seems older indeed than that of the god of medicine and should probably be placed between the original hero cult and the divine cult of later centuries.

²² In late centuries, of course, the patron of physicians and the Asclepius Archegetes were identified with the god of medicine, cf. below, pp. 139 f.; 248.

²³ For the interpretation of the scholarly tradition concerning Asclepius, cf. above, p. 71, n. 13. That the assertion of Strabo concerning Tricca's rôle (T. 714) is not borne out by the evidence will be shown in the discussion of the history of the temples and of their affiliation, cf. below, pp. 238 ff.

²⁴ Cf. below, pp. 238 ff.

was the town in which the god was born, whereas the Oracle is not known to have approved of the Triccaean contention, or even to have considered it.²⁵ The judgment of the ancient scholars, then, seems to be the result of historical pedantry. From Homer they concluded that Machaon and Podalirius, the sons of Asclepius, came from Tricca. The Triccaean too said this and showed the cenotaph of their heroes (T. 161).²⁶ Once the god had been established they probably were not slow in claiming that he was rightly theirs. And if the data of the religious development were not in accord with their pretensions, historical inquiry decided that they, certainly not the Epidaurians, had Homer on their side.²⁷ It was a kind of compromise when Apollodorus made Asclepius practice at first in Tricca and Epidaurus (T. 5), as if the demands of the two cities on Asclepius were equally well founded. But taking the whole evidence into consideration, it appears more likely that the god Asclepius was created in Epidaurus.²⁸

While the problem of the god's place of origin can be solved only with a high degree of probability, the time of Asclepius' deification can be determined with certainty, I think. For it is safe to say that Asclepius did not become a god until the end of the sixth century B. C. The excavations at Epidaurus have shown that the buildings dedicated to Asclepius are not to be dated earlier. It is impossible to trace the Thessalian cult beyond the fifth century B. C. Nowhere else is there any sign of an older worship of the god Asclepius.²⁹ That this is so squares well with the fact

²⁵ Cf. above, pp. 69 f. The lack of any Delphic statement concerning Tricca is the more astounding since the Oracle at first had been in agreement with the claim that Asclepius was born in the Dotian plain; cf. above, p. 68.

²⁶ Cf. above, p. 18.

²⁷ Wilamowitz too explains the decision in favor of Tricca as a consequence of the Homer exegesis (*Glaube*, II, p. 228).

²⁸ Cf. also below, n. 32. I side, then, with Wilamowitz who characterizes Asclepius as the god of Epidaurus (*Glaube*, II, pp. 227 ff.). Farnell (*Hero Cults*, pp. 247 ff.) believes that Tricca is the "original home" of the Asclepius cult, and admits Epidaurus' importance only from the fifth century on (*ibid.*, p. 254). But nothing definite is known about any earlier divine cult, as will be shown immediately. If the question were asked why the Epidaurians should have chosen a Thessalian hero—for in the beginning they acknowledged that Asclepius was born in the Dotian plain (cf. above, p. 69)—one might well answer that the hero Asclepius was known to everybody. Moreover, in the sixth century the saga had already established a connection between Asclepius and Argos: many of his "patients" were of Argive descent, cf. above, p. 41.

²⁹ As regards Epidaurus, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227; Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 155, and below, p. 243. Even Farnell admits that nothing is known that would prove a Triccaean cult before the fifth century B. C. (*Hero Cults*, p. 247), and yet he claims (*ibid.*, p. 254) that the Asclepius cult came to Epidaurus from Tricca "at some period after the date of Hesiod." It is true, the Triccaean sanctuary has not yet been excavated. The possibility of surprising new finds cannot be excluded. But the extant evidence unanimously points in the same direction. For the history of the sanctuaries in general, cf. below, pp. 244 ff.

that around 600 B. C. Asclepius had become the patron of physicians who from that time onward were called after him. Such a rôle must have increased the interest in Asclepius, and it was an easy step to elevate him, who had attained so much fame, to even greater honors, to the status of a god.

But how did it come about that the hero Asclepius gained divine prerogatives? Any solution of such a problem must necessarily be conjectural; yet a conjecture at least can be attempted; it is almost urged upon the interpreter by one striking fact characteristic of the beginnings of Asclepius' career as a medical god. In Tricca no less than in Epidaurus, Asclepius at first appeared together with Apollo Maleatas, one of the many Apollo figures worshipped in antiquity.³⁰ On him Asclepius was so dependent that even the famous Epidaurian miracles (T. 423) are still recorded in the name of Apollo and Asclepius. In Tricca the worshippers sacrificed to Apollo Maleatas before entering the sanctuary of Asclepius (T. 516).³¹ It seems to follow, therefore, that Asclepius, the hero of doctors, the son of Apollo the physician, became himself a god capable of healing sickness through his connection with Apollo Maleatas, a medical deity who healed the sick in their dreams.³²

In more technical terms: Asclepius began his divine practice as a coadjutor or assessor of another god. With such a hypothesis the fact that Asclepius was a demigod or a "daimon" is well in accord; for thus it was customary to address the coadjutors of great gods.³³ Moreover,

³⁰ Apollo Maleatas, whether he was a fusion of an originally independent Maleatas with Apollo (Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, pp. 393 ff., especially p. 397), or whether he was only a specific form of Apollo (Farnell, *Cults*, IV, pp. 235 ff., especially pp. 238 f.), certainly was an iatric god. This is generally admitted.

³¹ In Athens too initial sacrifices were made to Apollo Maleatas (T. 515). For the rôle of this god in Epidaurus, where the association between Asclepius and Apollo Maleatas lasted throughout antiquity (T. 424), cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 46. Note also that many other Asclepius temples were built over the foundations of Apollo sanctuaries; cf. below, p. 243, n. 3; p. 246, n. 16.

³² In Epidaurus in the fifth century B. C. Asclepius had only an altar and an *abaton* in the temple of Apollo (cf. G. Karo, *Weihgeschenke in Epidaurus*, 1937, p. 1). The fact that Asclepius, when he first started out, was connected with Apollo Maleatas is one more argument in favor of the Epidaurian origin of the god. Nowhere was the relationship between the two divinities closer than in Epidaurus (Farnell, *Cults*, IV, p. 239; *Hero Cults*, p. 254). Incidentally, Isyllus' statement (T. 516) that *even* in Tricca Apollo Maleatas received sacrifices, in my opinion, supports the belief that Asclepius was created in Epidaurus. Pointing to the importance of Maleatas even for Tricca, Isyllus seems to indicate that Asclepius' connection with Maleatas was of decisive importance and that also those who contested Asclepius' Epidaurian origin admitted that much. Religious arguments are here opposed to historical ones as they were derived from Homer.

³³ For Asclepius as a demigod or "daimon," cf. above, pp. 83 f. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 366, says: "Im Anhang der Theogonie 991 wird Phaëton als Tempelwächter

such a hypothesis explains how the new god could become a divinity revered everywhere. The connection between Apollo and Asclepius, being only a cult-association, could be repeated wherever Apollo Maleatas, or Apollo, was worshipped. Asclepius, as soon as he had risen to equal rank with the one who originally was his superior, could likewise go everywhere, even by himself. He may have had favorite temples, but so had other gods. Nothing impeded his mobility; he could extend his power over the whole earth.³⁴

★ In the religious language of the ancients such a connection as that between Apollo Maleatas and Asclepius might have been understood as one made by the superior deity himself. Thus Athena was believed to have established Erechtheus in her temple, thus Aphrodite established Phaëton in her sanctuary.³⁵ The modern interpreter is interested in finding a reason why the two, Apollo Maleatas and Asclepius, should have been related, and such a reason is not far to seek. Apollo Maleatas was an iatric Apollo. As such he must have grown obsolete in the course of time, for the various local Apollo cults could not remain aloof from the Delphic movement which gradually changed the former concept of Apollo with the result that the god lost his interest in medicine, at any rate in his personal function as healer of diseases.³⁶ Yet the god, or his priests, naturally had the tendency to retain the domain over which he once reigned, even if he himself could no longer be in charge of it. Therefore he needed an associate to do the job, while he remained the titular head of the sanctuary. He sought a helper who in his stead would take over the task of healing diseases. Is it so astonishing that he should have chosen Asclepius, his son, the great physician, the patron of doctors? Asclepius, to be sure, had died, no one could tell where his remains were to be found. But should the greatest of all doctors be really dead, should

Aphrodites zu einem *diōs daimon*. Das setzt voraus, dass *πάρεδροι* grosser Götter als Dämonen bezeichnet werden. Die Absonderung der Olympier drängte auf eine solche Unterscheidung," and he adds (p. 367): "Es mag Zufall sein, dass ich aus alter Zeit die Bezeichnung Dämonen für die *πάρεδροι* eines Gottes nicht belegen kann." The figure of Asclepius is perhaps such an example of relatively early time; for he was called "daimon" from the beginning. For *πάρεδροι* in general, cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v., III, 1, especially p. 1573, 11 ff.

³⁴ This explanation, then, does not encounter the difficulties of the older theories. Concerning the introduction of healing cults in various cities, cf. below, p. 119.

³⁵ *Iliad*, II, 546 ff.; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 987 ff.; cf. Rohde, *Psyche*, I, pp. 135 ff. Phaëton is expressly said to have been removed by the goddess when still alive. But after the fourth century B.C. even mortals, immediately after their death, were worshipped as *πάρεδροι*, cf. Roscher, *loc. cit.*, p. 1577, 40 ff. It is not improbable, therefore, that in earlier centuries heroes were chosen by the gods as coadjutors.

³⁶ Concerning the renunciation of medicine by the Delphic Apollo, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 39, and above, p. 36.

he no longer be able to help, should he be approachable no more, should he not be revived and restored to men by the gods?⁸⁷ Certainly, it is quite understandable that it was Asclepius who became an associate of his father, his coadjutor.

4. THE RANGE OF ASCLEPIUS' POWER

The hero of physicians, having been elevated to divinity, assumed the task of healing the sick. In his sanctuaries he cured those who were willing to be his patients. As to the manner in which he showed his power, there can be no doubt: the divine healer performed miracles. The diseases which he treated vanished overnight; the sick, having slept in the temple, awoke free from illness. Yet miraculous as the effect of the god's cures may have been, his procedure was not supernatural at all; it resembled that of a human physician. In dream-apparitions the god cut veins, he operated on his patients, he applied remedies. That he did at least in the beginning. Later on he restricted himself more and more to the rôle of a consulting physician, a physician of superhuman knowledge to be sure, but a physician nevertheless. In oracles he advised the treatment which had to be carried out by his patients; in dreams he prescribed drugs which the patient himself or his doctor was supposed to administer.¹

The cures of the god, then, though miraculous, his precepts, though beyond human wisdom, followed the pattern of rational and empirical medicine. The power of Asclepius was now divine, but in its nature his ability was not different from that which he had had when still on this earth. This fact distinguished the treatment of Asclepius from that provided by all the other healing deities. They, too, cured the sick, but nobody knew how they did it. Their accomplishments were outright witchcraft which could not be checked. Asclepius' medicine differed from human medicine only in so far as the god was infinitely better versed in his art and more successful than any human doctor, he was the god of "lofty art" (T. 593a).²

In the beginning Asclepius' power had two important limitations. For quite some time the new god was still so deficient that he could not perform his task all by himself, he depended on the might of his father,

⁸⁷ In this connection the assertion of the divine myth that it was the gods who revived Asclepius, and more specifically that it was Zeus who did this as a favor to Apollo (cf. above, pp. 75 f.), takes on a pregnant meaning.

¹ For a detailed interpretation of temple medicine, cf. below, Ch. III.

² What the hymn expresses by this solemn epithet (*ὑψιτέχνης*), Aristophanes brings out by calling Asclepius an "ordure-taster" (*σκατοφάγον*, T. 421, v. 706), an appellation often used for the human practitioner. Cf. also below, p. 135, n. 10.

although the father was participating in the deeds of his son only in name. It was relatively late that Asclepius grew into manhood and took his place alone, acting by himself without the mediation of his father.³ Moreover, at first the power of the divine Asclepius seems to have been such that he could not treat at two different places simultaneously. When he was in Epidaurus, the patients in Troizen had to wait; so at least the Epidaurian tablets say (T. 423, 23). In such instances his sons sometimes tried to handle the cases in his absence; yet they failed completely. Though the god could not be everywhere at the same time, he was the only one who could do the job right, and therefore he had to do it himself.⁴ Fortunately, as time progressed, he learned how to take care of his many patients at widely separate localities and to be able to satisfy the demands made upon him, or even stimulated by him, for he was wont to call his patients to his temples.⁵

While accomplishing these feats the healer of diseases also rose to the position of the giver and preserver of health. Wherever he came, heartfelt prayers were offered to him as the one who granted men to live free from sickness. The husband prayed for his wife, the parents for their children, the friend for his friend. But also the city as a whole revered Asclepius as the god who gave health. Solemn hymns were sung to him who kept the people sound in body; festivals were celebrated in honor of him who did not allow diseases to overcome men.⁶

It was in this twofold capacity as healer of diseases and giver of health that Asclepius finally extended his practice all over Greece and over the whole ancient world. The many other healing deities bowed before his might; he became the unchallenged master of the province of medicine. Once Asclepius had gained this position, the range of his activity did not basically change. Up to the end of antiquity he was mainly revered as the god of healing dreams and oracles.⁷ But it is only natural that in the long course of his reign different aspects of his power were accentuated. Changing concepts of the divine and of the world modified the understanding of the gods in general and thus also of Asclepius' influence. If

³ Cf. above, p. 99. But there remained traces of his original dependence on Apollo, cf. below, p. 183, n. 6.

⁴ As has been shown above, p. 86, in the beginning Asclepius used to act together with his children. T. 423, 23 is interesting because it indicates that the power of the god was nevertheless thought to be supreme. Note that the historian, Hippys, rationalizes the story and speaks of the servants of Asclepius (T. 422); cf. also below, p. 160, n. 12.

⁵ Cf. below, p. 112.

⁶ For Asclepius, the giver of health, cf. below, pp. 182 ff.

⁷ It should be remembered, however, that this same god throughout antiquity was also the protector of physicians and of laical medicine, cf. below, pp. 139 f.

the final form, in which the Asclepius religion emerged, is to be grasped, it is necessary to follow up this historical process in which the full import of the Asclepius figure was unfolded.

The first consequence of the new position which Asclepius occupied was, of course, that he was brought into contact with the life of the various cities in which he dwelt. Soon after the god had been received by all Greeks, the Epidaurian Isyllus attempted to make Asclepius together with Apollo the guarantor of the new constitution, of the peace and welfare of his city (T. 296).⁸ Isyllus, the prophet of Asclepius, also saw his god going in arms to the aid of the Lacedaemonians, the admired friends of Isyllus. Overjoyed by his vision, Isyllus told the people of Sparta that Asclepius had come to save them, and trusting in his message they forthwith revered Asclepius as their Savior (T. 295).⁹ In this instance Asclepius acted as the ancient gods and heroes used to do in behalf of those who were under their protection. But only once did he — trouble to play such a rôle, to accomplish such deeds, and then only for the sake of his beloved Epidaurians and of his friend Isyllus. In general he partook only in small matters of civic life. He was satisfied if documents of importance were deposited in his shrine (T. 794a), if he contributed to the dignity of the community through the right of asylum that was connected with almost all the great Asclepieia (*e. g.* T. 798), if he was in charge of the manumission of slaves (T. 718a).¹⁰ It was the character of his godhead that excluded him from political strife. His was the work not of war, but of peace. Heracles was quite right in saying of Asclepius contemptuously that he did not show "any bravery" (T. 264).¹¹

⁸ For a detailed interpretation of Isyllus' political aims, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 38 ff.

⁹ Concerning the event referred to by Isyllus (Philip's attack on Sparta in 338 B. C.) and the historical situation in general, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 24; 30 ff. S. Schebelev, according to E. Bickermann, *Philol. Wochenschrift*, 1930, p. 242, dates the inscription 218 B. C., but his arguments are not convincing. Manifestations of gods or heroes as saviors of their peoples were again experienced in Isyllus' time (cf. Nilsson, *Die Griechen*, p. 381).

¹⁰ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 248; such manumissions are known from Tithorea, Orchomenos, Thespieae, Stiris, Elateia, Amphissa, Naupactus. The practice followed was identical with that applied by Apollo in Delphi (cf. Farnell, *ibid.*), and it is by no means necessary to see in this function of the god "the tribal memory of ancestral kinship with Asklepios" (*ibid.*, pp. 248-9; concerning the Asclepius Archegetes in Tithorea, cf. above, pp. 96 f.). The importance of the Asclepius worship in general is quite sufficient for an explanation of the phenomenon in question. It is noteworthy that on the Tiber island sick slaves were freed when their masters did not support them (T. 858). In the Greek temples too there may have been a connection between the medical activity of the god and manumission.

¹¹ I wish to stress once more that the account of Asclepius' activities as given by Isyllus is singular. It is well understandable that he should have tried to ascribe in-

While thus the political functions of Asclepius remained limited indeed, what he did for the family was all-important. He was the patron and savior of the household. It is Aristides who most eloquently praises him as such (T. 317, 5), but his words, no doubt, express a feeling that was generally prevalent among men. And although this aspect of the Asclepius worship is especially characteristic of late centuries, it must have been of importance from relatively early times, as is evident from the prayer of the Coan woman in Herondas' mime (T. 482, *vv.* 83 ff.). The helper in disease has a natural affinity to the life of the family, for the family no less than the individual suffers from the burden and dangers of diseases, is troubled over their outcome and rejoices over their healing. And still another consideration played its part: since Asclepius gave health, he also gave healthy children, and thus immortality on this earth (T. 317, 5). It is the continuation of life that he guarded. Generally speaking, it seems permissible to state that Asclepius became the protector of the family. Gradually he usurped the place which in the classical period Zeus held, but relinquished when in Hellenistic and Roman centuries he was left in charge only of the royal household and of the empire at large.¹² As the god of the family, Asclepius naturally was concerned with every little detail of daily life. It is in this sense that Aristides can say that Asclepius, if any of the gods, was the one to whom one could pray, and did pray, in regard to everything (T. 316).¹³

In the position which the god had gradually acquired for himself, he could not afford to neglect one domain to which as a physician he had a birthright anyhow: that of giving oracles. Men are curious to know the future. For Greeks and Romans in particular foretelling and foreknowledge had great attraction. He who was to be their helper had to be able to satisfy their demands even in this respect. On the other hand, to the ancients, medicine and mantic were closely connected (*e. g.* T. 366); the physician could best prove his superiority by giving a

terest in political affairs to Asclepius, for Isyllus was a statesman and Asclepius the god in whom he believed. Moreover Epidaurus was the town sacred to the god above all others (T. 7). And yet even here such endeavors at reinterpreting the nature of the god were doomed to failure. Only in matters pertaining to medicine did Asclepius show if not political, at least social consciousness, cf. below, pp. 173 ff.

¹² For this change in Zeus' position, cf. K. Ziegler, Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Zeus, VI, pp. 696, 51 ff. This book was already in print when I found that Nilsson, *Griechische Religion*, I, p. 378, has drawn attention to an inscription of Panamara (*Bull. Corresp. Hell.*, XII, 1888, p. 269, n. 54), according to which Zeus Ktesios, Tyche and Asclepius were revered as *ἐνοικίδιοι θεοί*.

¹³ Some examples of the god's helpfulness are his support in distress at sea (T. 317, 10; cf. also the inscriptions of Syros [Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1672, 47] and Thasos [Gruppe, *Mythologie*, p. 1442, n. 11]), and his protection during travels on land, cf. below, p. 190. Yet Asclepius did not disdain even to give advice to a boxer (T. 317, 11).

prognosis.¹⁴ It is therefore not surprising that the divine physician should have predicted the future or revealed that which was hidden, especially after he had changed his cures from the kind in which he actually performed the treatment to the kind in which, often in the form of an oracle, he only advised the right means of proceeding in a given case. Yet, some of the Epidaurian inscriptions attest even oracles of a non-medical character (T. 423, 24).¹⁵ In the second century B. C. it is expressly noted that Asclepius superintended divination and augury (T. 301).¹⁶ Later, the fact that Asclepius was the interpreter of the future, seemed a matter of course to Aristides (T. 317, 10). According to Celsus, the oracular activity of the god extended even to whole cities, especially to those which were dedicated to him, like Tricca, Epidaurus, Cos, and Pergamum (T. 292; cf. T. 294). The evidence, then, is quite sufficient to warrant Lucian's assertion (T. 291) concerning an oracular Asclepius who was consulted for general purposes.¹⁷ Nor were the gods justified in enjoining upon the giver of oracles, as they did according to Lucian, that he should not overstep the realm allotted to him. He did only what by his very nature he was privileged to do.

In the same way, finally, the cosmic significance which Asclepius took on was strictly within the boundaries of his own province.¹⁸ Not that great importance attaches to Pausanias' assertion, according to which Asclepius was identified with the air because of its usefulness (T. 297). True, Pausanias claims that this was no less a Greek conviction than it was a Phoenician one, but it is obvious from his own words that he only wishes to refute the reproach that the notions of the

¹⁴ In general, cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, p. 85, and P. Friedländer, *G. G. A.*, 1931, pp. 251 f.

¹⁵ In general, cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 112 ff. and *ibid.*, nos. 46; 63.

¹⁶ That Apollodorus' statement does not concern medical oracles alone has rightly been stressed by Jacoby, *F. Gr. Hist.*, Kommentar, II, p. 770, 1 ff. (*ad* 244 F 116). Thraemer, *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1656, 13 ff., is wrong in giving the impression that Apollo restricted his son to medical oracles.

¹⁷ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 246 b, says: "The vague phrase in Lucian, *Div. Concil.* 16, suggests an oracular Asklepios consulted for general purposes; but I am not aware of any recorded example except the Epidaurian inscription." But, as has been shown, there are many more testimonies of this kind preserved. Rohde's evaluation of the oracular Asclepius is more in agreement with the facts (*Psyche*, I, p. 141, n. 3). Incidentally, the Asclepius of Memphis too gave oracles, cf. L. Deubner, *De Incubatione*, 1900, pp. 36 f.

¹⁸ As far as I am aware the cosmic influence of Asclepius is the last aggrandizement of his power to be considered. Thraemer (*E. R. E.*, VI, pp. 551-52) supposes Asclepius also to have been in charge of agriculture and gymnastics; but such a claim is based on a misunderstanding of Plato, *Symposium*, 186 E. Eryximachus finds in gymnastics and agriculture the same principles that hold good of medicine; he does not say that these departments are under the care of the god of medicine. For Asclepius, the god of the literati, cf. below, pp. 206 ff.

Phoenicians in regard to the nature of the gods were superior to those of the Greeks. Such an opinion was not typical and never generally accepted; it is indicative of the religious syncretism of late centuries.¹⁹ Nor is it of any consequence that in testimonies of the fourth and fifth centuries A. D. Asclepius is equated with the sun (T. 298 ff.) or, in union with Hygieia, with the sun and the moon (T. 301). Although even here the influence of the two heavenly bodies on health as well as on sickness is stressed, these statements are conventional and determined by the common solar theology of the dying pagan world.²⁰ It was from his position as the protector of medicine that Asclepius rose to a peculiar rôle, that he became a vitally essential cosmic factor. For he was thought now to be in charge of the health of the universe, he was believed to be the physician of the whole world. He was acclaimed as the one "who guides and rules the universe, the savior of the whole and the guardian of the immortals, . . . he who saves that which always exists and that which is in the state of becoming" (T. 303).

Such an interpretation reflects a belief, a philosophical attitude, which was very common at least from the early Christian period on. At that time there was a general tendency to remove the highest god from this world; he was supposed to have no direct influence on it; the lesser gods, created by the supreme Being, were those who acted and who protected the world of phenomena. On the other hand, the perceptible world, separated from the true god, was not self-sufficient; it could not subsist without permanently being guarded and supervised. Otherwise it would grow old, become ill, even be destroyed. The cosmos, then, like the human body was held to be subject to disease; its health was apprehended as a harmony that has to be restored constantly, just as the health of the human body which consists in the harmony of the humors has to be reëstablished ever anew. In such a system the divine physician naturally had an essential function. Of necessity he, rather than any other god,

¹⁹ The Pausanias passage is corrupt so that the details of his argument remain obscure, but its general meaning is quite clear: in proof of his assumption he can refer only to the temple at Titane where the same statue, it seems, was supposed to represent the sun and Hygieia. In the nineteenth century Pausanias' interpretation was favored as the true explication of Asclepius' nature; cf. e.g. Panofka, *Berl. Phil.-Hist. Abh.*, 1845, p. 271. In Preller-Robert, *Mythologie*, I, p. 514, Asclepius is still characterized as the divine representative of the healing power of nature, though Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, pp. 746 f., long before had correctly evaluated the philosophy behind Pausanias' declamations. For the common ancient interpretation of Asclepius as a deified mortal, cf. above, pp. 77 f.

²⁰ Deubner, *Die Römer*, II, pp. 502 f., speaking of the late solar theology finds it especially characteristic of Macrobius from whom T. 301 is taken. For the Neo-Platonic interpretation of Asclepius which in spite of certain similarities still differs from that of Macrobius, cf. below, n. 24.

became the patron of the world, the guardian deity of the universe; for he alone was able to preserve the cosmic organism intact.²¹

Moreover, the god himself, of his own free will, had volunteered the information that he was the soul of the cosmos, the one whom Plato called "the soul of the universe" (T. 302). There could be no doubt that this revelation, communicated to Aristides, the most devoted servant of Asclepius, referred to the scheme of the world, as outlined in the Platonic *Timaeus*.²² Consequently the god, after having taken his place in the Platonic world and after having determined his rôle in his own words, came to be of great importance for the Neo-Platonists, who in their attributions of the various powers to the individual deities paid close attention to what the gods themselves had revealed about their own nature.²³ In the opinion of the Neo-Platonists, Asclepius was in fact the soul of the world by which the creation is held together and filled with symmetry and balanced union (T. 304).²⁴ Through Asclepius, the

²¹ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 278-9, takes Aristides' interpretation of Asclepius (T. 303) more or less as the rhetor's personal opinion. But this can hardly be correct. Aristides was not an original metaphysician, or rather he was no metaphysician at all. He refers to philosophical speculations only occasionally, cf. A. Boulanger, *Aelius Aristide*, 1923, p. 199. That he talks about Asclepius as he does, immediately raises the suspicion that he is echoing a more general belief. Aristides' views seem reminiscent of the Neo-Pythagorean philosophy and of the Platonism of the first and second centuries A. D.; cf. K. Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 1926¹², pp. 521; 542 f.; 556.

²² The reference made by the god is to *Timaeus* 34 B. Aristides, in his dream, is accompanied by Pyrrallianus, an otherwise unknown rhetor who lived in the temple of the god and was well versed in Platonic philosophy. Concerning the self-revelation of Asclepius to Aristides, cf. Boulanger, *op. cit.*, p. 202. It is noteworthy that, while the Stoics identified Zeus with the cosmos and therefore called him the soul of the world, Aristides names Asclepius thus. For him, Zeus was the creator of the world and of the gods, but he himself was beyond the world. On the other hand, all the lesser gods were emanations of Zeus, and it is in this sense that Aristides' concept of Zeus-Asclepius must be understood (T. 317, 4), not as an identification of Zeus and Asclepius (contrary to Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 278). In regard to Aristides' concept of Zeus, cf. J. Amann, *Die Zeusrede d. Aelios Aristides*, *Tüb. Beitr. z. Altertumswiss.*, XII, 1931; K. Ziegler in Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Zeus, VI, pp. 701-2. Only in late Orphic theology (T. 315) are the various gods no longer differentiated. The significance of the Pergamene cult of Zeus-Asclepius (T. 317, 4), to which Aristides' concept of the god may be related (cf. Farnell, *ibid.*, and Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1661, 59 ff.), cannot be determined; no details about this worship are known. Maybe the people of Pergamum shared Aristides' views, or they may have celebrated their god as Zeus in order to express the high regard in which they held him, cf. above, p. 84, n. 29. For the attestation of Zeus Asclepius in literature and inscriptions, cf. A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, II, 2, 1925, pp. 1076 ff.

²³ The Neo-Platonists collected such oracles, cf. Porphyry, *De Philosophia ex Oraculis haurienda*, ed. G. Wolff, 1856 (T. 13 is another example taken from the same book, cf. *ibid.*, p. 127). Boulanger, *op. cit.*, p. 208, n. 1, was the first to suggest a dependence of the Neo-Platonists on Aristides.

²⁴ Iamblichus here, in contrast to Porphyry, interprets Asclepius not as lunar, but as solar intellect. These Neo-Platonic identifications of the gods with heavenly bodies are of course different from the physical interpretations referred to above, pp. 105 f.

savior of the whole world, the health and safety of all is guaranteed (T. 306). Through him, the elements do not relax their indestructible bonds; through him, the universe remains young and healthy (T. 309).²⁵

Since the Neo-Platonists, progressing along the lines of earlier speculation, stressed even more than did their predecessors the remoteness of the highest god, the frailty and weakness of the world which requires supervision and salvation at every moment, Asclepius' task, to them, was all-important. In their opinion, therefore, Asclepius was a god even before the beginning of existence, a transcendental deity (T. 305; cf. also T. 259), although he was ruling over the phenomenal world, although he was within it. Zeus had engendered Asclepius from himself; but through the sun, through Apollo, he had revealed him to the mundane regions (T. 307). In his earthly appearance Asclepius was the third from Zeus (T. 303). Thus the god of medicine took his place in the pagan trinity.²⁶ He had risen high indeed. But despite all changes in his influence and in his position, he did not change his nature: he remained the healer of diseases and the giver of health.

5. THE RISE OF THE ASCLEPIUS RELIGION

The cult of Asclepius, who was created a god relatively late, is first to be found in such cities of Greece as were of small influence in the religious or political affairs of the ancient world. Nevertheless the god soon lost his merely provincial character. His worship spread everywhere; it became one of the most renowned among the many ancient cults; it outlasted most of them; it was the hated enemy and dreaded competitor of Christianity. What were the forces that caused this astounding development?

In modern discussions the rise of the Asclepius religion is given scant attention. If an attempt is made at all to explain this puzzling phenomenon, it is restricted to casual remarks; no systematic investigation has ever been made. Among the reasons proposed, that which attributes the ascendancy of the cult to the propagandistic efforts of Asclepius' priests is the most favored. At first migrating with their tribes, later from Epidaurus, the metropolis of the cult, they are supposed to have

²⁵ The discussion of Asclepius' part in Neo-Platonic philosophy as given here is by no means exhaustive; the problem is too complex to be solved in this context. Note T. 308: relation of Apollo to Asclepius; T. 310; 311: relation of Asclepius to Asclepius; T. 312: Asclepius surrounded by a retinue of associated and subordinate gods; T. 313: Asclepius-Telesphorus; T. 314: demiurgic and Asclepiadic health.

²⁶ For the importance which this fact assumed in the discussion between pagans and Christians, cf. below, p. 136.

colonized the ancient world for their god.¹ The great success of their propaganda is traced to the fact that the lower classes, those who at all times believe in miracles which are nothing but the deceit of priests, showed a special sympathy and regard for Asclepius. The rise of the new god is thus linked together with the less respectable trends of ancient religious life. Moreover, the belief in Asclepius is thought to be a relapse into old superstitions which more enlightened generations had discarded long ago; it is considered "the beginning of the end," the death of truly Hellenic religion.² Some critics grant that the Asclepius worship was capable of "deep and genuine sentiment," but they hasten to add that it lacked "all higher religious values and a really ethical foundation."³ A very few connect certain tendencies in the Asclepius cult with the general development of late religious thought, thereby giving to the worship of the god a share in higher aspirations; yet, on the whole, these scholars, too, find the god one of the less attractive religious figures, whose power was acclaimed by the vulgar, not by the best.⁴ Even the fact that Christianity had to fight against Asclepius more than against any other ancient god is taken as a proof of the imperfection of the Asclepius cult rather than of its dignity. For it was only early Christianity that had to fear Asclepius, only that Christianity which was a kind of "medicinal religion," not yet imbued with those lofty ideals which later were integrated into the Christian faith.⁵ Generally speaking, the verdict on the cult and the influence which it undoubtedly had, is one of reprimand.

¹ Cf. e.g. Rohde, *Psyche*, I, pp. 142 f.: "Eine unternehmende Priesterschaft hatte, mit ihren Stammesgenossen wandernd, seinen, unter diesen alt begründeten Dienst weit verbreitet und damit den Asklepios selbst an vielen Orten heimisch gemacht." Or Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 256: "The later Panhellenic position of Asklepios owes much, then, indirectly to his early development at Epidauros; and directly also, in so far as she propagated it by missionary effort at least when she was invited to do so"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 258. Cf. also Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 178.

² Cf. e.g. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 102: "Asklepios . . . dessen Walten immer höher geschätzt wird, je kränker die nationale Religion, ja die Nation selber wird"; cf. also Glaube, II, pp. 231; Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 318-19: "Aber sein Siegeszug, der noch während der Verbreitung von Christus- und Mithrasglauben anhält, zeigt den Niedergang echter Religiosität . . . Asklepios wurde . . . der Totengräber der althellenischen Religion. Für die griechische Volksreligion aber bedeutet die hohe Blüte des Asklepioskults den Anfang vom Ende, viel mehr als die sogenannte Aufklärung."

³ Cf. Nilsson, *Die Griechen*, p. 411; he, too, speaks of "größte Mirakelkuren, die dem massiven Glauben zusagten." S. Wide, *Gercke-Norden*, II, p. 226, is one of the few to acknowledge that there is "auch eine ethisch vertiefte Religiosität."

⁴ Cf. e.g. V. Ehrenberg, *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, p. 289 (relation to the worship of kings); Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 102 (relation to the assessment of values); Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 275 ff. (relation to medical healing); Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, p. 95 (relation to individualism). Yet it is fair to say that such statements concern only details and do not modify the modern disapproval of the cult as such.

⁵ Cf. A. Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the first three Centuries*, transl. by J. Moffatt, I, 1904, pp. 121 ff.

manding rejection: propaganda, not belief; superstition, not religion; selfishness, not devotion.

Such views regarding the reasons for Asclepius' ascendancy indicate an attitude toward the understanding of religious phenomena in general which from the outset does not seem propitious. Granted that the priests of Asclepius propagandized their god, how did they succeed in persuading the people to accept him? Greek priests had no worldly authority or power on which they could rely in furthering their aims; there were many more miracle workers among the ancient gods. Why then did Asclepius win the day? Only because his priests were more adroit than those of the other gods?⁶ Furthermore, supposing that Asclepius' healings were trickery, apt to please and convince the simpletons, can mere deceit create pious reverence, and such reverence as was paid to Asclepius for many centuries? Could fools alone have supported and successfully carried on a cult which gained the upper hand over the cults of the wise and educated? Of all the Greek gods it was Asclepius who kept his hold over the people by far the longest. When the Oriental religions had almost completely superseded the Greek and Roman cults, Asclepius was still a powerful deity.⁷ Would all this have been possible if he had not had the attractive power and the charm of a great and a true god?

The appearance of Asclepius and the rise of his worship must first of all be interpreted as a religious phenomenon; it must be related to the religious history of the ancients and can be understood only in this connection. There were miracles to be sure, but what did these miracles mean to the ancients? There were external factors, no doubt, outward means which came into play in this religious movement as in any other historical process, and they must be investigated carefully. But it seems safe to contend that even religious propaganda becomes effective only in so far as it meets with religious needs, that it remains sterile unless men feel that the new doctrine accords with the conscious or unconscious hopes and wishes within themselves. Certainly, the belief in Asclepius presupposes an attitude different from that which instigated the worshippers of the Olympians, an experience other than that of men of the Homeric or classical centuries—Asclepius preëminently was the god of a later period

⁶ As a matter of fact, the assumption that Greek priests made propaganda in the interest of their gods is highly debatable. Delphi supported certain cults; the Orphics seem to have made missionary efforts (Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 162; 178; II, pp. 121 ff.; 148); beyond that, there is hardly any evidence of a propagandatory expansion in regard to any one of the ancient cults. For Delphi and Asclepius, cf. below, pp. 121 f.

⁷ Cf. e.g. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 275: "We discern that above all the genuinely Hellenic deities he was endeared to the hearts of the people"; cf. also Deubner, *Die Römer*, II, p. 490; Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

—and the respect paid to him was based on values different from those cherished before. The historian cannot allow himself to view them with aversion. He must acknowledge the god in Asclepius, as did the ancients. Otherwise he cannot hope to achieve an understanding of the Asclepius religion.

In approaching the subject with such an attitude, moreover, one will not only try to explain why Asclepius was accepted at all. One will also endeavor to explain why he, rather than any other healing deity, was chosen as the god of medicine by all the ancients; to ascertain how it came about that such a late god found recognition in spite of all his older and strongly entrenched competitors; to determine for what reasons the god of medicine became the foremost savior; to account for the fact that he, of all the ancient gods, was the leading deity in the struggle between the dying world of the pagans and the rising world of the Christians.

i. Religious Reasons

If one wishes to understand the significance of the Asclepius cult and the reasons for its ascendancy, he must first of all try to analyze the motifs that instigated the worshippers to approach the god, and to evaluate the god's attitude toward the pious as they saw it. Next, it is necessary to confront the religious experience of the followers of Asclepius with those characteristic of the centuries in which his cult was rising, and to ask how this experience fits into the temper of the times.¹

People came to Asclepius above all to invoke his help in diseases. They came, then, not as members of a family or a community but as individuals. For in diseases men are left to themselves; their fellows, much as they may sympathize with the fate of the sick, cannot really share in it. Again the god, if he gave his succor, removed the most personal griefs and sorrows of his worshippers. That is, Asclepius was concerned primarily with the individual, as is every physician.² But it is not enough to describe the relationship between the god and his supplicants in such general terms. The ancients understood the rôle of the physician not only as that of a personal advisor and helper. They believed that the doctor in taking care of the patient assumed the responsibility which the superior

¹ In the following analysis I shall make reference to those factors that seem to have had the most general importance for the acceptance of the god of dream healings, the performance of which was Asclepius' specific function. Other aspects of his godhead and the influence of non-religious values on the rise of the god will be discussed below, pp. 119 ff.; 125 ff.

² This fact has long been recognized, cf. e. g. Nilsson, *Die Griechen*, II, p. 411; Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 490; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 471; 505.

has for his subordinates, the king for his subjects; he was supposed to act as the guardian of the patient who gave himself over into the tutelage of the doctor.³ Thus the connection between the healer and the sick became even closer and more intimate. Certainly, what was true of the good human practitioner and his patients applied no less to the divine physician and those under his care: it was a kind of patronage, of guardianship that the god assumed over his worshippers. Under his hands they felt safe; his temples were justly compared to a most secure and steadfast port receiving the greatest number of people and affording the most in tranquility (T. 402). On the other hand, so conscious was Asclepius of his responsibility toward his followers that he imparted his assistance not only when they approached him; he summoned his patients, he deigned to seek them instead of being sought by them (T. 400; 402; 432; 436).⁴ Truly, he was "looking after man" (T. 317, 5), truly, he showed providence (T. 317, 7) in pursuing his art day and night, in healing the limbs of the body that had been destroyed by nature.

A Now, ever since the end of the fifth century B. C., when the Asclepius cult began to make its way, a desire was felt for a more personal contact with the divinity than was afforded by the ancient state cults, for a relation that was not shared by all the others.⁵ The collective worship of the citizens was supplemented by individual communion with the godhead. As time went on, the state cults became petrified and turned into a merely formalistic ritualism.⁶ Men, freer than they had been to choose their own gods, naturally wanted them to care most of all for the fate of the individual, his sorrows and joys, his sufferings and his happiness. There was a craving for a personal relationship to the deity, and the belief in divine providence progressed steadily.⁷ In such a world it was natural that

³ Cf. e.g. Plato, *Politicus*, 293 C; *Laws*, 720 A ff.; Hippocrates, *The Physician*, C. M. G., I, 1, p. 20, 18 ff.; Galen, X, p. 4 K.: [Ἀσκληπιάδαις] οἱ τῶν νοσοῦντων ἡξίουσιν ἄρχειν ὡς στρατηγοὶ στρατηγούμενων καὶ βασιλεῖς ὑπηκόων.

⁴ To look out for patients was customary for human physicians, cf. e.g. T. 126, and in general Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, p. 91. It is interesting to observe again and again how closely the concept of the god resembles that of the medical practitioner.

⁵ Cf. Nilsson, *Reflexe von dem Durchbruch des Individualismus in der griech. Religion um die Wende des 5. u. 4. Jahrh. v. Chr.* (*Mélanges F. Cumont*, pp. 365 ff.); *Griechische Religion*, I, pp. 760 ff. Nilsson refers to the Asclepius religion as one of the examples of the new trend.

⁶ For the state cults in later centuries and the attitude of people toward them, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 271; Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 490.

⁷ I am aware of the fact that in the Hellenistic period *Tyche*, the personification of blind fate, held sway over men. But *Pronoia*, Providence, was considered a goddess too, and found worship even among the common people, together with *Tyche* (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 390; for *Pronoia*, cf. also Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 84). Moreover, philosophers succeeded in destroying the belief in the rule of irrational Fate (cf. Wilamowitz,

Asclepius found favor, for if any god was interested in the private needs of men, in their most personal affairs, if any god showed providence, it was Asclepius.

Moreover, the deified physician gave help freely and without envy. He refused assistance only on moral grounds; those who were themselves not virtuous he would not heal (T. 394). But this was the only request which he made of his patients. Otherwise he did not expect anything, no reward (T. 320), not even belief in his power; he cured his patient, whether he was a devotee or a disbeliever (T. 423, 3).⁸ As the testimonies aver, he was the most man-loving of the gods (T. 422; 804, 5). This attitude of philanthropy was, so to say, native to the divine physician. Even a human doctor who lacked love of man was not considered a good physician; to practice the art of healing out of concern for man, not for money's sake or for glory, was held characteristic of good craftsmanship.⁹ No matter how often human beings may have failed in exhibiting the moral quality demanded of them, the god unswervingly acted in accordance with the ideal set before the physician. But in the god, philanthropy was more than a professional virtue. It constituted the essence of his divinity. His life on earth had been pure, given to healing, to helping mankind. His entire divine existence consisted in fulfilling this function of being beneficent to mankind (T. 320).¹⁰

Likewise from the end of the fifth century it was no longer thought that the divinities were the enemies of man. The sinister belief in the envy of the gods, the terrifying conviction that they delight in harassing

ibid., p. 309). And the growing influence of the mystery religions indicates the kind of religious experience that was sought: an affinity as close as possible between god and man.

⁸ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 271 f., rightly stresses that Asclepius "was not vindictive like the God of the Old Testament." To be sure, he does not heal those who cheat him but rather punishes them (T. 423, 7), yet he is easily ready to forgive any offence (T. 423, 36; also T. 423, 11). It should be added that Asclepius, unlike the God of the New Testament, did not demand faith. Latte's claim to the contrary (*Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 120) is unfounded; cf. below, pp. 161 f.

⁹ The earliest testimonies to this effect are to be found in Hippocrates (*Precepts and Physician*, C. M. G., I, 1, pp. 32, 9; 20, 12). The *Oath* does not yet mention philanthropy, but its doctrine was interpreted as implying this virtue (cf. Scribonius Largus, p. 2, 17 ff. [Helmreich]). In Roman times the view that medicine was a calling that required philanthropy became ever more widespread; cf. e.g. Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, pp. 764 ff. [Mueller].

¹⁰ Farnell, who has emphasized the relation between the god's philanthropy and the ancients' evaluation of medicine, the most philanthropic of all social activities (*Hero Cults*, p. 276), says in regard to Julian's statement (T. 320): "Julian's phrase concerning the *φιανθρώπειν* of Asclepius, who heals not for reward, but to gratify his own loving heart, not inaptly expresses the popular conviction, and marks off this man-god from the older Hellenic divinities." Asclepius seems to have assumed the rôle of Hermes who in early centuries was considered the most philanthropic of the gods (cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 19).

and destroying men, gradually disappeared. Plato's demand that the divinity be revered as free from grudge and hatred became generally recognized.¹¹ The opinion was abandoned that the gods were subject to affections, just like men; only the belief in their goodness seemed acceptable. For a god was now visualized as the one "who rises superior to inordinate desire, to envy and jealousy, and is generous, beneficent, a lover of man."¹² Did Asclepius not answer all the wishes that men could have in regard to divine perfection?

Finally, Asclepius was ever-present in his temples; every cure that he performed was an epiphany of his divine person, a proof of his divine existence. His healings, his miracles, as they are called by the modern, to the ancients were "his glorious deeds," attesting that divine might was still alive, that there were gods and that they were powerful.¹³ This experience, in fact, at least from the third century B. C., provided the most convincing evidence for the belief in gods. Just as the Athenians acknowledged the divinity of Demetrius because he had proved his power through his deeds, because he had achieved what they were not capable of doing themselves, so the people at large were ready to believe in the deified Asclepius because they experienced his might.¹⁴ Like all deified

¹¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247 A; *Timaeus*, 29 E; cf. Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 15.

¹² In later centuries the Stoics were the main exponents of such doctrines—the definition of the divine referred to here is taken from Musonius (p. 90 [Hense]). But the Epicureans too rejected the belief that the gods were passionate, or haters of men. The Stoics again were foremost in the "accommodations" of the old myths through which the objectionable features were interpreted away. Unquestionably, what in earlier periods had been denounced only by some individuals as incompatible with the character of a god, was now discarded by the majority. For what does the worship paid to *Aidos* and *Nemesis* mean, if not the victory of moral concepts (Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 45)? Even a writer like Pliny treated the mythological fables of old with contempt.

¹³ The word *ἀπερή*, "glorious deed" or "power," seems first to have been used by Isyllus in describing Asclepius' help for Sparta (T. 295). To the god's medical assistance it was applied by Hermodicus in the third century B. C. (T. 431; the genuineness of the inscription has been reaffirmed by G. Karo, [*Weihgeschenke in Epidaurus*, 1937, p. 3] against the objections raised by Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 100 ff.); the Epidaurian tablets (T. 423) still speak merely of cures. Later, the word *ἀπερά* occurs in T. 438 and T. 441. *Ἐπιφάνεια* commonly denotes Asclepius' appearance in dream healings, e. g. T. 382. For the history of the terms *ἀπερά* and *ἐπιφάνεια*, cf. Herzog, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 ff., who also points out that the word miracle (*θαῦμα*) begins to become customary usage only in Christian collections of divine healings. Yet, Aristides who usually speaks of the *δύναμις* of Asclepius (T. 317, 4) once calls him *θαυματοποιός* (T. 409).

¹⁴ V. Ehrenberg, *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, p. 289, in his interpretation of the Athenian hymn on Demetrius (Athenaeus, VI, 253 d ff.) rightly says: "Die Folgerung, die hier gezogen wird, ist nicht, dass die Götter im Weltbild überhaupt überflüssig seien oder ein völlig anderes, rein geistiges Wesen hätten, sondern dass an die Stelle der 'hölzernen' oder 'steinernen' ein anderer 'wahrer,' das heisst lebender Gott tritt." And he adds: "Es ist eine durchaus verwandte Erscheinung, wenn der Glaube an den Heilgott Asklepios, der im Traume, natürlich in menschlicher Gestalt, erschien und so heilte, ungeachtet aller Fortschritte der rational-wissenschaftlichen Medizin im gleichen 3.

kings of that century and of later times he was a man-god. While he was not a warrior, he was an artisan of superior knowledge and skill, of incomparable wisdom, and many a great genius was held to be divine.¹⁵ On the other hand, the belief in the might of the Olympians was rapidly declining. It was not so much the sceptical criticism that destroyed their old-inherited position, it was not so much the philosophical and scientific explanation of nature that led to their downfall. Though still worshipped, they vanished from the scene of real life, because they no longer seemed able, or willing, to help. Their place was largely usurped by other deities—for men want gods—by lesser ones, be they man-gods who had risen to godhead through their achievements, like deified kings, or be they personifications of abstract concepts.¹⁶ This was another reason why Asclepius, the “daimon,” who never became one of the Olympians, the hero, who had become a god in charge of one special domain, that of healing, was acceptable to men.

The Asclepius cult, then, was most closely akin to the trends of religious thought prevailing in Hellenistic and Roman centuries. In fact, the god seems to have represented some of the new ideals with more determination than any of his peers.¹⁷ Small wonder that the reverence paid him increased steadily, that his worship gradually spread over the

Jahrhundert stärkste Intensivierung erlebte”; for the concepts of the *παρρησία* and *ἐπιφάνεια* of these gods, cf. *ibid.*, p. 292. Note that the religious experience here presupposed is similar to the “Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft” of the Christians (*Hebrews*, 2, 4; cf. G. E. Lessing, *Sämmtliche Schriften*, ed. K. Lachmann, X, 1839, pp. 33 ff.). Cf. also below, pp. 133 f.

¹⁵ For the nature of Asclepius' godhead, cf. above, pp. 84 f.; 91. His wisdom is praised e. g. T. 593. It is important to remember that the worship of kings was only one instance of the deification accorded to great men. The founders of philosophical schools also received divine honors. Even Lucretius can speak of Epicurus as a god (*De Rer. Nat.*, V, 8; III, 15). The words of the Oracle concerning Lycurgus' divinity (Herodotus, I, 65) correspond exactly to Galen's statement about Asclepius (T. 245). In general cf. Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 111 ff.

¹⁶ In general, cf. Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 74 ff. Ehrenberg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 279 ff.

¹⁷ I need hardly add that the evaluation I have given of the new concepts that from the end of the fifth century B. C. fundamentally reshaped ancient religious life is in no way intended to be complete. I have selected only those features which seem to have had the greatest bearing on the Asclepius religion. Moreover, the historical development naturally was not as consistent as I have sketched it. During the many centuries through which Asclepius' reign lasted religious thought fluctuated, the various tendencies gained or lost momentum. But the evidence preserved does not suffice to give a precise picture of the position of Asclepius at every moment. One must take recourse to generalizations. Finally, I have made no attempt to distinguish strictly between that which is commonly called philosophical religion and that which figures as common religious consciousness. It is quite true that some aspects of the cult may have had less weight with the many than with the intelligentsia, and vice versa. Only all aspects taken together, in my opinion, account for the ascendancy of Asclepius. The cults of foreign gods, on the other hand, despite their general importance, I have not taken into consideration, because the worshippers of Asclepius were those who still adhered to the truly Greek deities.

entire ancient world, that he acquired a position of pre-eminence. Asclepius truly was a living deity, near to men's hearts. It was he who now gave shelter to the more ancient gods and supported their failing might; it was his festivals that were still celebrated when those of other deities began to be forgotten—in Athens, the *agon* in honor of Asclepius was one of the last to be commemorated; it was to Asclepius that hymns were dedicated in ever-growing number when poems had ceased to be written for the rest of the gods; it was Asclepius who remained rich in offerings at a time when other sanctuaries decayed and who, while hardly any money or other gifts were presented anywhere else, tried to get rid of the overflow of dedications in his temples.¹⁸

But here one might object: it is just this popularity of Asclepius which serves to prove that he was a god of the masses rather than of the few that count, of the lower strata rather than of the upper classes, of the uneducated not of the cultivated, of the egotists not of the moralists. Superficially the god may have conformed even to higher ideals, but fundamentally it was the downright fraud of his miracles that attracted men, and certainly not the best among them.¹⁹

Now, to disregard for the moment the question whether Asclepius' miracles were frauds, it is true that they impressed people. But to say it once more, they impressed everybody because they seemed to reveal the reality of divine power and providence.²⁰ One may also admit that a large number of Asclepius' patients consisted of the poor. The god prided himself on healing the paupers (T. 321), on being satisfied with slight thanksgiving if no more could be presented to him (T. 482, *vv.* 11 ff.; 79 ff.). There can be no doubt that those who had no money or very little availed themselves of the opportunity thus offered, and consequently were among the staunchest adherents of Asclepius.²¹ That this was so, does not mean, however, that the rich were not also in favor of the new god. Without the support of wealthy patients who paid hand-

¹⁸ In this short characterization of the god's position I have followed Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 347; 359; 468; 474; 482. For an elaboration of the details, cf. the discussion of the cult and of the history of the temples, below, *passim*.

¹⁹ Cf. e. g. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 505: "Der Gott, an dessen Wunder die besten Männer nicht glaubten"; cf. also above, p. 109; Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 490: "Gottheiten wie Asklepios und Serapis, die damals wirklich lebendige Geltung im Volk hatten . . ."; Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 319: "Es ist eine oft in den Religionen der Menschheit wiederkehrende Erscheinung, dass der hellsten Einsicht hoher Geister der abergläubische Wahn der Menge entgegensteht. Der Asklepioswelt fehlt das *θεῖον*, das längst gefunden war."

²⁰ Cf. above, pp. 114 f. The whole problem of temple medicine and especially that of the cures of Asclepius is discussed in detail below, pp. 162 ff.

²¹ In this respect the Asclepieia had a very important social function in the ancient world, cf. below, pp. 175 ff.

somely, the god could not possibly have taken care of his poor clientele; nor could he have built his splendid temples, had there not been many who gave him more than their share. That the upper strata of society frequented his temples even in early centuries is proved by the fact that the old Epidaurian inscriptions mention so many patients from out of town; poor people could not afford to travel. Moreover, those who in grateful recognition of the god's help introduced the cult in their home-cities were certainly members of the nobility; no ordinary citizen could attempt to propagate a new god.²² In later times, of course, rich and poor were mingled among his clients, and peasants no less than senators, shoemakers no less than emperors asked the advice of Asclepius. It is, then, well nigh impossible to draw any distinction as to the social standing of the god's visitors.²³

But one might still insist that poor and rich alike, people of low and high rank, may be fools, and that they were attracted by the miracles of Asclepius in which they believed with the superstitious credulity and naïveté of the uneducated. It has been claimed, in fact, that the great spirits, those who had any scientific or philosophical training, those who had culture, and those who had true religion, were certainly not swayed by this god of temple dreams and oracles that were nothing but the deceit of clever priests. It is strange, indeed, that such an argument should ever have been put forward. As for the great men, the best, the erudite, one need not be satisfied with Aelian's general statement to the effect that Asclepius, as he was the helper of the poor, was also the protector of the cultured (T. 456; 321). Was it not Sophocles who wrote the most famous paean on Asclepius (T. 587)? Did he not receive the god into his home (T. 590)?²⁴ Did not other great poets of the fifth century B. C. write tragedies dedicated to Asclepius (T. 455)? Did not the most renowned artists create the cult statues of the god? Did not the foremost

²² Cf. below, p. 119.

²³ For more particulars on Asclepius' clientele, cf. below, p. 120.

²⁴ Wilamowitz' interpretation of this testimony is strange indeed. He says (*Glaube*, II, pp. 232-33): "Am stärksten musste das Auftreten des Sophokles wirken" (namely in favor of the Asclepius cult), but then he adds: "und für uns ist es am wichtigsten, dass dieser fromme Mann für einen solchen Gott empfänglich sein konnte, so sehr, dass er dessen Erscheinung in seinem Hause erlebte. Das scheint zu dem Bilde schlecht zu stimmen, das wir uns von dem Dichter der Tragödien machen. In der Tat würden weder Aischylos noch Euripides dazu fähig gewesen sein. Es stimmt aber dazu, dass er allein die eleusinischen Weihen verherrlicht und offenbar selbst empfangen hat." It is more adequate, I think, to turn the argument around and to say that if such a man as Sophocles favored Asclepius, the god must have been a true representative of the divine. Again, at another place, Wilamowitz adds (*ibid.*, p. 235): "Für Sophokles war es keine Erscheinung, die ihn zur Umkehr von seinem alten Glauben zwang, sondern eine Bestätigung seiner Hingabe an den Glauben der Väter." This may have been the experience of many.

architects build his sanctuaries? ²⁵ Did not Socrates in his last words ask his friends to make a sacrifice to Asclepius (T. 524)? ²⁶ Was Theophrastus (T. 318), who saw in Asclepius' ethics a model of what men should do, a poor judge of morals and human behavior? ²⁷ Was Epictetus (T. 406), who speaks with reverence of Asclepius, a worse philosopher than Dion and Plutarch who do not mention him? Was Marcus Aurelius, in whose opinion Asclepius was a great healer (T. 407), a man of smaller stature than Lucian who belittled Asclepius (T. 265)? ²⁸ Were the Neo-Platonists, who abound in praise of Asclepius, not the great philosophers of their time? Were not Rufus and Galen great physicians, and did they not believe in the cures of Asclepius, as did nearly all ancient doctors? ²⁹

Yet it is neither necessary, nor helpful, to collect names—the god did not keep a file of his patients and his friends, or at any rate not every great man who asked his help left a note for posterity attesting his visit. The forces behind the Asclepius cult were the same that were operative throughout the religious life of later centuries, the beliefs and convictions of the Asclepius worshippers were in accord with all that was sacred to the ancients. This fact alone would fully justify the assumption that the best no less than the lowest found in this god their savior. Otherwise his worship would never have gained the importance that it actually had throughout the ancient world.

²⁵ Cf. the chapters on the artistic representation of Asclepius and on the history of the temples.

²⁶ In this case too Wilamowitz' comment can hardly be accepted. He claims (*Glaube*, II, p. 236): "Sokrates zeigt sich auch hier als guter Bürger, der den Göttern des Staates das Ihre gibt. Er wird freilich die ärztliche Hilfe des neuen Gottes nicht für sich in Anspruch genommen haben, aber er hatte eine Frau und kleine Kinder und hinderte Xanthippe oder auch Kriton nicht, wenn sie zu Asklepios gingen." For the interpretation of Socrates' words and the importance which they assumed in late antiquity, cf. below, pp. 130 f. Incidentally, Kern goes so far as to say that Plato's criticism of Pindar's poem (T. 99) shows "seinen Glauben an die Göttlichkeit des Asklepios, der die Hellenenwelt im Sturm erobert hat" (*Religion*, III, p. 21). This, it seems to me, is exaggerated, for Plato speaks about the hero Asclepius whose medical art he praises as the prototype of good medical care (T. 124).

²⁷ For the interpretation of T. 318 and its relation to Theophrastus, cf. below, p. 126, n. 6.

²⁸ Wilamowitz claims (*Glaube*, II, p. 471) that for a great many people, yet not for Plutarch, Asclepius was a living deity, and he adds (p. 505) that Plutarch, Dion and Epictetus, to be sure, do not attack the belief in miracles, but that their very silence is betraying and should be acknowledged by modern critics with all its implications. Conclusions *ex silentio* always are precarious. Moreover, Epictetus is not silent about Asclepius, and the Emperor Hadrian would hardly have dedicated a bust of the philosopher in the temple of Epidaurus (cf. below, p. 254, n. 13), had Epictetus abhorred the god. Nor is Wilamowitz justified in refusing to believe that Marcus Aurelius saw in Asclepius the sender of his healing dreams (*Glaube*, II, p. 494, n. 1). Marcus Aurelius' respect for Asclepius is clearly expressed in his letter to Fronto (T. 577), and his court physician, Galen, thanked Asclepius for the help bestowed upon him in his dreams (T. 458). The Emperor was hardly more enlightened than his doctor.

²⁹ For the Neo-Platonists, cf. above, pp. 107 f.; for Rufus and Galen, and the attitude of ancient doctors toward temple medicine, cf. below, pp. 139; 147.

ii. Non-religious Influences

Certain as it is that the god Asclepius exercised his influence because, in the eyes of the ancients, he was a true god, one should not overlook the subsidiary causes which helped in bringing about the rise of his cult. Generally speaking, the post-classical centuries were favorably inclined toward the introduction and acceptance of new worships. Once the influence of the old Greek gods had been weakened, even Oriental deities found recognition. The conquest of new territories, the building of new cities brought a re-orientation of life which allowed people to select their own gods for their homesteads. It was relatively easy then, in a world not as inflexibly joined as of old, to win proselytes for a new deity. But why did Asclepius outdo all other gods in the extension of his might?

To begin with the most obvious reasons: cults in antiquity were often spread through private individuals, and it was especially the healing cults that were disseminated in such a way. The Asclepius cult in this respect formed no exception. Patients who had visited one of the great temples of the god, in grateful recognition of the help bestowed upon them, established Asclepius sanctuaries in their home towns.¹ Thus Naupactus was founded (T. 444), thus Pergamum (T. 457); the custom remained in vogue throughout the centuries. And though such a cult in the beginning was a private worship, not officially recognized, it tended to become a state cult and in fact succeeded in most cases.² Moreover, very often a city, threatened by disease, felt the need of Asclepius' help and asked the god to take up his abode within its boundaries. It was thus that Asclepius came to Rome (T. 846).

Beyond this power of expansion inherent in the Asclepius worship as a healing cult, there must have been many personal influences, some of them no longer to be determined, some at least to be conjectured, which

¹ Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, pp. 37 ff.; 106) has rightly stressed this kind of "self-propaganda" which furthered the extension of the cult. He has also drawn attention to a passage where Plato, adversely criticizing this custom, describes it quite vividly (*Laws*, 909 E-910 A, transl. by R. G. Bury, *Laws*, II, 1926 [Loeb]): "It is no easy task to found temples and gods, and to do this rightly needs much deliberation; yet it is customary for all women especially, and for sick folk everywhere, and those in peril or in distress (whatever the nature of the distress), and conversely for those who have had a slice of good fortune, to dedicate whatever happens to be at hand at the moment, and to vow sacrifices and promise the founding of shrines to gods and demi-gods (*δαίμοσι*) and children of gods; and through terrors caused by waking visions or by dreams, and in like manner as they recall many visions and try to provide remedies for each of them, they are wont to found altars and shrines, and to fill with them every house and every village, and open places too, and every spot which was the scene of such experiences."

² This happened for instance in Athens, cf. below, n. 4.

contributed their share to the astonishing process of Asclepius' rise: the skill and shrewdness of certain priests in charge of the main centers of the cult, their ability to cooperate and to remain in contact with the changing temperament of the centuries; the interest of famous men in the god, be they powerful political individuals like Alexander the Great or Marcus Aurelius, or at least influential statesmen like the Epidaurian aristocrat, Isyllus, or the Roman Senator, Antoninus, or be they great literary personalities like Apuleius or Aristides.³ There is no reason to deny that Asclepius was not only a great god but also a lucky one; apparently it was the right people who were interested in him, those who would further his ambitions.

Moreover, two events within the historical process of the acceptance of the cult were of outstanding importance, and seem to have been decisive in accelerating the ascendancy of the god: his introduction into Athens and his sanction through the Delphic Oracle. The Athenians received Asclepius into their city relatively early, at the end of the fifth century B. C., and soon he was recognized as one of their official gods.⁴ Many factors may have contributed to the Athenian interest in him. The Athenians considered themselves the originators of culture and civilization, and Asclepius was a culture hero who had become a god, the protector of medicine, an art which was regarded as one of the greatest human accomplishments.⁵ Besides, Athena, the goddess of the city, had shown a very distinct sympathy for Asclepius; she had given him a share in the blood of the Gorgon, as she had done to Erechtheus (T. 3). This instance, too, must have endeared Asclepius to the Athenians.⁶ But, what-

³ For the names referred to here, cf. *e.g.* T. 821, 407, 295, 739, 608, 317, and the chapters on the cult and the history of the temples where more details concerning these persons are given and additional names are mentioned.

⁴ It was Telemachus who brought Asclepius to Athens in 420 (T. 720); cf. above, p. 66. When the state officially accepted the cult, is not known (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 232). Apollonophanes still calls Asclepius a *ξενικὸς θεός* (T. 720a). But around 350 B. C., according to inscriptions, the recognition had already taken place, cf. Kutsch, *Attische Heilgötter*, p. 26. The reason for the original introduction was most probably a successful healing (cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 38). It is hardly correct to assume with Kern (*Religion*, II, p. 312) that the worship was brought to Athens because Asclepius had helped the city during the great pestilence; some ten years had passed since, and in that case one would not expect private, but rather official action, as later in Rome (cf. below, p. 252); besides, it was Apollo Alexikakos who was credited with saving the city from the dangerous epidemic (cf. Pausanias, I, 3, 4). Nor can one believe with Farnell (*Hero Cults*, p. 258) that the Athenians submitted to Epidaurian propaganda in 420, for in that year Athens was on the brink of war with Epidaurus; cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, p. 442. (Pericles had also attacked Epidaurus in 430; cf. Bury, *op. cit.*, p. 390).

⁵ Concerning the Athenian claims, cf. Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 56 ff.

⁶ For the interpretation of T. 3, cf. above, p. 43, n. 76. At first sight one might think that the saga connects Asclepius with Athena because he was revered in Athens. But

ever the reasons for Asclepius' recognition, his position was certainly strengthened by the fact that he was accepted in that city whose power was almost supreme in matters spiritual and religious. The attitude of the Athenians toward him was bound to make an impression on other regions and cities. With his entry into Athens, the "world-city," the Epidaurian Asclepius lost his provincial character; he became a Panhellenic god.⁷

The other conspicuous element in the rise of the Asclepius worship, the support of the Delphic Oracle, began to assert itself at almost the same time at which the god arrived in Athens. Near the end of the fifth century B. C. Asclepius was honored with a sacred precinct in Delphi.⁸ The Oracle also assisted in the expansion of the cult to other places. In a few instances it recommended the founding of Asclepius temples.⁹ But doubtless the most important and most effective assistance which Delphi gave to Asclepius was that it legitimated him as the son of Apollo and Coronis (T. 31) and put an end to the dissension about the place of his birth, throwing its whole influence behind one city, Epidaurus (T. 36).¹⁰ The Oracle also sanctioned Asclepius' position as healer of diseases. The Homeric hymn expressly referred to this, his medical function (T. 31), and Isyllus, with the approval of Delphi, addressed Asclepius as "the reliever of illness, the granter of health, great boon to mankind" (T. 594). Thereby Asclepius was designated by Apollo as the medical deity to whom he had entrusted the domain over which he

Athena is the typical helper of such figures as Heracles and Perseus, men who through their own endeavor accomplished great feats, and she is the patroness of the arts as well; cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 22-23. The connection between Athena and Asclepius, then, is hardly derived from historical facts, but rather is a purposeful invention of the saga (Aristides still speaks of the 'Ἀσκληπιοῦ καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς συμφωνία (p. 310, 3 ff. [Keil]); cf. also T. 449a; 732).

⁷ Concerning Athens' influence on religious life in general, cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 265; 78 f. The importance of the Athenians' acceptance of Asclepius has always been felt, cf. e. g. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 258; Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, pp. 118 ff. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 94, stresses the Athenian "Gegengabe für die Stiftung des attischen Asklepieion," that is, he assumes that Athenian artists created the likeness of the god. If it were true that the Asclepius type originated in Athens, that the god was seen by men through the eyes of Athenian talent, this would certainly have been an important factor in the history of his ascendancy. But modern attempts to trace the origin of the cult statue to the circle of Phidias have failed, cf. below, p. 218, n. 12.

⁸ Cf. Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 156 f. Farnell's statement that Asclepius was never admitted within the Delphic area (*Hero Cults*, p. 248) is not correct. Cf. below, p. 246.

⁹ The temples of Halieis and Rome are said to have been founded on the instigation of Delphi (T. 423, 33; 850, vv. 631 ff.). Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 156, therefore is quite right in saying that the testimonies for the active support of the cult through Delphi are not numerous. But the Oracle had other means of furthering Asclepius' ambitions, and it made use of them.

¹⁰ Cf. above, pp. 71 f.

himself had once ruled. Thus confirmed by the highest authority, the new god was even more likely to find the acclamation of all men.¹¹

Yet not even with all these factors to his advantage, with all this array of supporting powers would the temples of Asclepius have arisen everywhere, had there not been a general willingness on the part of the people to receive him and to abandon in his favor those divinities with whom they were accustomed to take refuge in sickness and distress. Long before Asclepius had become the accessory of Apollo, long before the god had been established in Epidaurus, his name had been familiar to all Greeks. Homer had sung of him; Hesiod had recounted his story. Physicians had taken him wherever they went; with them, he had entered villages and towns, the great cities, all sections of Greece. Whenever the people had used the name Asclepiads, they had been reminded of the patron of their doctors, of Asclepius.¹² In short, the hero had been received by the Greeks long before the god began to aspire to their adherence. When the god finally came, he found the ground well prepared for his worship by the fame of the hero. Moreover, the fact that the physicians revered Asclepius must have inclined people favorably towards him. If even the doctors acknowledged his medical abilities by regarding him as their patron, how could he fail to be a good physician, an efficient healer of diseases? The extension of the Asclepius worship, therefore, once it had been established, was a development that started from within rather than from without. The god hardly forced his followers into subjection, nor did he impose his reign after hard battles; he found the doors wide open.

Finally, when Asclepius at last deigned to come into a world which was predisposed to receive him, he came as the dispenser of a good which men learned to estimate ever more highly: health and freedom from disease. This change in the appreciation of values was a development almost contemporaneous with the rise of the Asclepius cult.¹³ In Homeric centuries the warrior, the hero, found his sole aim in glory; he was intent only on battle, on victory; health to him was no value in itself. In post-Homeric centuries, however, physical well-being became more

¹¹ It must be stressed, however, that the attitude of Delphi towards the Asclepius religion presupposes a strong general interest in the god. Fundamentally the Oracle was opposed to new gods, and it did not favor "incubations." Yet, just as it finally allied itself with the worship of Heracles and Dionysus because the people approved of them (cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 37; 41-42; H. W. Parke, *A History of the Delphic Oracle*, 1939, p. 431), it seems to have recognized Asclepius because he had become popular. Concerning Delphi's influence on the ethics of the Asclepius religion, cf. below, p. 126, n. 6.

¹² Cf. above, pp. 54 ff.

¹³ In general, cf. Edelstein, *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, pp. 267 ff.

important and began to assume a place among the goods for which men were striving. In consequence of a rather pessimistic evaluation of the outcome of all human endeavor, of the balance between happiness and suffering in the life of the individual, the estimation of health grew increasingly strong. It was health even more than beauty or riches that constituted the *summum bonum* of later generations; to be healthy seemed the indispensable pre-requisite of all joy and happiness. If this is true of the classical period, it is even more valid for the Hellenistic era and later centuries. With the destruction of political freedom, the interest in health, the appreciation of bodily fitness became more intense. Merchants and businessmen, scholars and artists, who were no longer free citizens but subjects of a king, and who left war and politics, except the petty politics of their own communities, to professional soldiers and royal servants—this bourgeois society naturally delighted in the worship of the god. "When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot become manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied"; thus a physician epitomized the value of health.¹⁴ And men in general agreed with him and put soundness of body before all other goods pertaining to human happiness. Not even philosophers, not even the Stoics could dare to minimize the value of health. It is true, the new masters of the world, the Romans, in the beginning of their reign revolted against such a philosophy. But at that time Asclepius already had entrenched himself too strongly to be shaken in his power, and soon the Romans, too, submitted to the Greek idolatrous belief in health as a value in itself. No wonder that among people of this disposition the god of medicine, the giver of health, was a great god.¹⁵

One more fact is to be considered: Asclepius was the god who would postpone the day of death; he intervened when the sick were despaired of,

¹⁴ Herophilus *apud* Sextum Empiricum, *Adv. Math.*, XI, 50.

¹⁵ Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 102, was the first to see the importance which the value ascribed to health had for the rise of the Asclepius religion. He says: "Eine so grosse und allgemeine Angelegenheit ist die Gesundheit dass darum der ihnen (*sc.*, Machaon and Podalirius) zum Vater gegebene Asklepios späterhin in grossen und reichen Tempeln verehrt wurde, während einem Homeros, einem Dädalos nur hier und da bescheidene Opfer von ihren Kunstgeschlechtern gebracht wurden. Nur nach dem Masstab wonach die Lebensgüter im Allgemeinen gemessen werden, ist die Heiligkeit des Asklepios wie anderer Götter gestiegen." Farnell, too (*Hero Cults*, pp. 275-6), stresses the significance of health: "No physical need of man is more imperious than the need to escape from physical suffering; no divine ministration is more vehemently craved, more ardently besought than that which provides this escape; and none other awakens so warmly the gratitude of the worshipper." Yet, both scholars have failed to notice the special significance of health for the ancients. Compared to this most essential factor it is no sufficient explanation for the later expansion of the new cult to say that civilized people need recreation in fresh air, as it was to be found in the Asclepieia, cf. *e. g.* Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 86, n. 64. Cf. also below, p. 158.

when all other help was failing.¹⁶ He saved men from Hades, the god who to the ancients was the most hateful of all. Hades alone had no altar among them; no hymn was sung in his honor; no sacrifices were offered to him. For he was not fond of gifts, nor could he be bought by persuasion; he was adamant and implacable.¹⁷ Through Asclepius those who had approached the doors of the nether world were given back to life. Through him they became alive again, as they said (T. 419).¹⁸ They lived not only once but twice (T. 317, 6), and sickness seemed almost advantageous on account of this experience (T. 402). For who loves life more dearly than do those who were at the point of losing it? And who was fonder of life than were the ancients? Most human beings have a desire to live, but the Greeks delighted in the beauty of life and in the brightness of light more perhaps than any other people. Even Achilles did not refrain from exclaiming: "Nay, seek not to speak soothingly to me of death, glorious Odysseus. I should choose, so I might live on earth, to serve as a hireling of another, of some portionless man whose livelihood was but small, rather than to be lord over all the dead that have perished."¹⁹

To men who thus judged about the value of life, Asclepius was indeed the savior (T. 463 ff.), he who granted "that we may see the sunlight in joy, acceptable with bright Hygieia, the glorious" (T. 592).²⁰ It was

¹⁶ Cf. above, p. 82.

¹⁷ Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, IX, 158-9; Aeschylus, *Fr.* 156 [Nauck]; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*, V, 4; and in general Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Thanatos, IX (2), pp. 1252; 1257 f.

¹⁸ T. 419: ἀναβεβλώκα. The testimony is taken from one of Menander's plays. That a comedy represents the reaction of the patients of Asclepius in this manner, warrants the conclusion that this was what people in general felt. It was not only Aristides who used such language (*e.g.* T. 402, but cf. also 317, 6) or any other devotee whom one might accuse of a bias in favor of the god.

¹⁹ Homer, *Odyssey*, XI, 488-91 [tr. by A. T. Murray, Loeb]. Plato in his criticism of Homer considers these verses the first to be deleted in the poem (*Republic*, III, 386 C). His polemic proves how strongly they reflected a common feeling. To be sure, fear of death was not universally the rule. The pessimism of classical centuries praised as the highest, the greatest blessing not to be born, and as the second to hasten back from whence one came (Sophocles, *Oedipus Colonus*, 1224-27). Stoic and Epicurean philosophers proudly asserted man's mastery over death. Still, even under the cover of their debates the horror of death is noticeable, and perhaps what Bacon says of the Stoics was true of all those who defied death by glorifying its nothingness: they bestowed "too much cost on death, and by their preparations made it more fearful" (*Essay on Death*, cf. W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, I, pp. 202 f. [Appleton]). Needless to say, even those who most strongly emphasize the pessimistic component in Greek thought do not go so far as to deny that also among the Greeks the majority loved life and feared death (cf. J. Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, II⁹, pp. 401 ff.; 412). Asclepius himself, it seems, was well aware of this fact and tried to assuage the hearts of his worshippers like a good Platonist rather than a Stoic or an Epicurean, cf. below, pp. 127 ff.

²⁰ The expression "to see the sunlight" is equivalent to the expression "to live"; cf. *Iliad*, XVIII, 442, and for more parallels, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Naturgefühl, XVI, p. 1829, 4 ff.

with good reason that his temples became a new center of religious life for the ancients. One might well say of all of them what Aristides says of the sanctuary of Pergamum: "Here fire-brands friendly to all men were raised on high"; here "the stern-cable of salvation for all was anchored in Asclepius" (T. 402). And it was probably not only Aristides who felt that "neither belonging to a chorus nor sailing together nor having the same teacher is as great a thing as the boon and profit of being a fellow pilgrim to the temple of Asclepius and being initiated into the first of the holy rites by the fairest and most perfect torchbearer and leader of the mysteries, to whom every rule of necessity yields" (T. 402).

6. THE TEACHING OF ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius was the impersonation of the divine healing power; his function was that of giving and preserving health, of relieving from disease. At first glance this fact seems certain proof that his worship, in spite of all its truly religious aspects, was a materialistic one, that he was a god of the body rather than of the soul. Asclepius played a dominant rôle in antiquity, one might say, because of the Greeks' this-worldliness; like them he preferred the visible to the invisible, the life here to the Beyond.

To be sure, Asclepius was concerned primarily with men's bodies. It is the physician's duty to look after the bodily well-being of his patients, and Asclepius in doing so only fulfilled his appointed task. Nor can the fact that the god prolonged the lives of the sick be looked upon as objectionable, while at the same time human doctors are highly praised for similar achievements. Moreover, it is necessary to stress that the god or his worshippers in their concern for the body in no way forgot that health was only a means, not an end in itself, that men must be well in order to be able to do their daily work. What other than the realization of this truth is voiced in the fervent words of his priest (T. 428): "How shall I come to your golden abode, O blessed, longed-for, divine head, since I do not have the feet with which I formerly came to the shrine, unless by healing me you graciously wish to lead me there again so that I may look upon you, my god, brighter than the earth in springtime?"¹

¹ The passage has been strangely misrepresented by Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 277, who prints it with the omission of all reference to the disease from which Diophantus suffered (podagra) and then says: "the tone approaches the warmth of some of the best and most personal of our Psalms." Such a statement, even granted that the poem shows a great strength of emotion, hardly seems appropriate. An attitude similar to that of Diophantus is evident from the words of Aristides (T. 317, 5): "[Asclepius granted

Nor did the god disregard spiritual values. He recognized that mind and body should be harmonized, that the latter must even be subordinated if the true goal of life is to be achieved. What other than the awareness of such an interdependence of soul and body found expression in the prayer (T. 323): "Relieve me of my disease and grant me as much health as is necessary in order that the body may obey that which the soul wishes, and, to say it in one word, a life lived with ease"?² Or in the words of Julian (T. 324): "The Muses train our souls with the aid of Asclepius and Apollo and Hermes." Such utterances show that the god was not too great a materialist. He had remained in contact with the progress of laical medicine which from the Hellenistic centuries on acknowledged that the mind cannot work properly if the body fails, or impedes the soul, that health is a balance of corporeal and intellectual factors.³ Nor had he stood aloof from the development of ethical thought that put more and more emphasis upon the values of the spirit. Certainly the ancients never felt that the body was detestable, that sickness was a grace bestowed by God.⁴ Still, this does not mean that their concept of health was wholly somatic.

What is more, the god respected and enforced moral ideals. Not only did he sift his patients by refusing to help those whom he did not deem worthy of help, not only did he himself follow the highest moral standards,⁵ he even expected those who came to him to strive for perfection as it was envisaged by philosophers. For in contrast to the outward purity of ceremonies and rites he desired for them the inner purity of the heart. It was Asclepius on whose temple at Epidaurus the words were inscribed: "Pure must be he who enters the fragrant temple; purity means to think nothing but holy thoughts" (T. 318).⁶ Besides, the god expected his

men] other things individually, such as the arts and professions and all the various modes of life, using one common remedy for all pains and troubles, namely health."

² The significance of this prayer has been clearly recognized by L. Dyer (*Studies of the Gods in Greece*, p. 236), and W. Pater (*Marius the Epicurean*, Ch. III) uses it to illustrate the ancients' attitude toward health. The fact that the words occur in Aristides' *Oration on the Asclepiads* is hardly an objection to their being quoted for Asclepius.

³ Cf. Edelstein, *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, pp. 258 ff. There is a fundamental difference between the theory of the fourth century B. C. (Diocles) and that of the first century A. D. (Athenaeus). While in the beginning physical exercises alone are mentioned, later on they are counterbalanced by reading and studying, especially as regards elderly people. Galen expressly mentions Asclepius' "psychic gymnastics" (T. 413).

⁴ In this connection Aristides' testimony (T. 402) is of interest. Only because the god restores health to the sick, can disease be called almost advantageous; cf. above, p. 124.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 113.

⁶ T. 318 is taken from Porphyry. That he is copying this passage from Theophrastus has been shown by J. Bernays (*Theophrastos' Schrift über Frömmigkeit*, 1866, pp. 62 ff.). Theophrastus concurred with Asclepius' views, and they are in agreement also with the opinion of Plato (*Phaedrus* 279 B; cf. also Epicharmus, *Fr.* 26 [Diels-Kranz]).

patients, after they had been healed by him, to lead a better life in the future than they had done before, he urged them: "Enter a good man, leave a better one" (T. 319). So great was the responsibility which the divine physician felt for those whom he treated, so firmly was he convinced that health and freedom from disease must be regarded as the means to some higher attainment. Asclepius was a true son of Apollo, he was a teacher as well as a healer, and it is symbolic that some testimonies name in one breath as children of the god of Delphi Asclepius, the physician of the body, and Plato, the physician of the soul (T. 322).⁷

It seems, moreover, that the god was concerned not only with the life here but also with the Beyond. He himself was a *mystes*, one of those initiated into the sacred revelation of Eleusis (T. 564 f.). The evidence to this effect is late, to be sure, it goes back to the second century A. D. But a connection between Asclepius and Demeter is attested much earlier, at the end of the fifth century B. C. When the god came to Athens, he resided first in the temple of the goddesses of Eleusis (T. 720).

Strange as it is that Asclepius should have been received by Demeter rather than by his father Apollo,⁸ it would be rash to draw any conclusion from this fact concerning Asclepius' particular interest in the Eleusinian cult. Perhaps Demeter opened her sanctuary to Asclepius because he arrived at the time of her festival, the Great Eleusinia. On the other hand, there was a natural affinity between the goddess of agriculture and the god of medicine. Both husbandry and medicine preserve life. Even later medical writers parallel the two: the one gives nourishment to the healthy, the other to the sick.⁹ Besides, the Demeter cult, in the eyes of the Athenians of the fifth century B. C., was the foundation of civilization; agriculture, they thought, was the starting point of a refined life. Medicine too, in the opinion of the ancients, was a product of civilization; barbarians and primitive people, if they were not believed to live free of disease, were at least supposed to be unfamiliar with the medical art.¹⁰

Asclepius' attitude may have been determined by Delphic teaching, cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 125, n. 2; 126 f.

⁷ Bernays (*op. cit.*, p. 76), quite rightly says: "Allmählich hatte sich Asklepios im griechischen Glauben aus seiner ursprünglichen Stellung eines nur leibliche Gesundheit schaffenden Heros zu der Würde eines höchsten Gottes, eines Spenders allseitigen geistigen wie leiblichen Heils (σωτήρ) emporgehoben." Cf. below, p. 133.

⁸ Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 312, has rightly stressed this point. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 118, suggests that Telemachus, who introduced Asclepius into Athens, was a priest of Eleusis.

⁹ Celsus, *De Medicina*, *init.*

¹⁰ Concerning Demeter, cf. Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 56 ff. In 418 B. C. the Athenians invited all Greeks to send sacrifices to Demeter, a demand that Nilsson explains by their conviction that Eleusis was the cradle of agriculture and civilization.

Thus the peaceful god who relieved suffering naturally was a favorite of Demeter, the goddess of peace-loving people.

But even if the relation between Asclepius and Demeter originally was brought about by chance, or did not signify more than a harmonious friendship; even if the report that Asclepius was a *mystes* in the beginning simply was an elaboration on his stay at the sanctuary of Demeter, instigated by the feeling that Asclepius, like other heroes or demigods, needed the initiation into the Mysteries in order to become more pious and just, to become in every respect better than he was before¹¹—still, the fact remains that Asclepius became a *mystes*, and that he was revered as such in Eleusis (T. 565a).¹² Moreover, Asclepius' worshippers, at any rate in the Christian era, were also devotees of Demeter, thus imitating their god's friendship with her. Many dedications to Demeter were found in Epidaurus.¹³ Asclepius asked Apellas, his patient, during the period of the treatment to make offerings to himself and to Epione, as well as to Demeter and Kore (T. 519). It is hard to believe that such a sacrifice should have been without meaning.

The Demeter cult, apart from its importance for civilization, was supposed to give its worshippers an inkling of a higher existence, of the life after death, and consequently it was thought to convey also the true knowledge of life in this world. Demeter, as she was revered by men from the fourth century B. C. onward, was in ever increasing measure the goddess of other-worldliness.¹⁴ Those whom the god treated, sick with grave illnesses, were on the borderline between life and death. Asclepius cured them; he saved them from Hades. In urging them to pray to the Eleusinian goddess, did he not imply that, after their torments and anguish, their narrow escape from death, he expected them to rectify their way of living and henceforth to act in accordance with the knowledge of the initiated, to see the things here in the true light of the things

That medicine is unknown to barbarians and to primitive races is stated by Hippocrates, *On Ancient Medicine* (C. M. G., I, 1, p. 39, 11). The similarity between agriculture and medicine, between Demeter and Asclepius, serves also to explain why Machaon and Podalirius, in their medical activity, could be compared with Triptolemus (T. 282, 15), or why Hippocrates, the servant of Asclepius, could be compared with Triptolemus, the dispenser of Demeter's gifts (T. 467).

¹¹ Diodorus, V, 49, 6.

¹² Cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 314 f., and Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* *Mystes*, XVI, p. 1350, 25 ff. That Asclepius was a *protomystes*, as has sometimes been claimed, is hardly correct; cf. Kern, *ibid.*, p. 1350, 60 ff.

¹³ For the close relation between Epidaurus and Eleusis, cf. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, pp. 118 f., and Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 315.

¹⁴ Cf. Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 53; 59; 63 f. The ethical and metaphysical message of the Eleusinian cult is clearly established by such statements as that of Isocrates (*Panegyricus*, 28).

there? Did he not intimate that, although he had saved them this time, it was their lot as mortals eventually to suffer death, and that he wanted them to accept their destiny with that hopeful confidence which was accorded to men by divine revelation?

The god of medicine himself had nothing to tell about the life to come: as a physician it was not his task to concern himself with the Beyond; in saving men, he was concerned with this world.¹⁵ Yet Asclepius seems to have felt that those who came to him, who were in the extreme peril of life, ought to be initiated into the mystery of eternity by those who were privileged to reveal it. This feature of the Asclepius cult is remarkable indeed, for the Greek gods in general showed little interest in transcendental problems. None of the Olympians had anything to teach about the other world; even Apollo was intent on forming the ethical attitude of men here and now, without regard for metaphysical doctrines, without appeal to a Hereafter.¹⁶ The only ancient worship characterized by an experience other than that of this world was the cult of Eleusis. Asclepius, by allying himself with Demeter, by joining together this world and the other, gave to his worship a significance far beyond that of a merely materialistic healing cult.¹⁷

¹⁵ It should be noted that only Asclepius Imouthes, the Egyptian Asclepius, was supposed to reveal the mysteries of creation (T. 331, *vv.* 170 ff.). Aristides, in a vision in which the wonders above and below were shown to him, and in which Sarapis was the main actor, saw this god together with his great protector, Asclepius (T. 325). Yet, the true mysteries of Asclepius, in the opinion of Aristides, were his healings; as the one through whom men live twice, he calls him the fairest and most perfect torch-bearer and leader of the mysteries (T. 402; cf. above, p. 125). It seems that the Greek Asclepius, the god to whom this inquiry is restricted, did not reveal mysteries. That he was believed to have been a *mystes* himself may explain why a grandson of his, he too named Asclepius, was made the pupil of Hermes Trismegistos (T. 329) whose fame was founded on his doctrine of salvation; cf. F. Ueberweg-K. Prächter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 1926¹², p. 514, and W. Scott, *Hermetica*, I, 1924, pp. 286 ff. Naturally, the advocates of magic likewise tried to use Asclepius for their purposes. Those who sought a short cut to knowledge would conjure up the inventor of medicine and ask him for a share in his wisdom (T. 326). More modest people wanted him to enhance the efficacy of love potions (T. 327), and it was as helper in love affairs that Asclepius was reproached by the Christians (T. 330). A magic formula by which the leader of magicians induced the god to appear is preserved (T. 328), and here, in a complete reversal of the old tradition (cf. above, p. 45, n. 80), Asclepius seems to have been credited with a descent into the nether world. All these features, however, are late reflections of the growing influence of mysticism and magic and have little to do with the genuine Asclepius religion.

¹⁶ Cf. e. g. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 206.

¹⁷ The strong connection between Asclepius and Demeter is generally recognized by modern scholars. Yet they are wont to minimize its importance (cf. e. g. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 244: "His connexion with the Eleusinian mysteries is merely that of an outsider, he is admitted to them as a new denizen of Athens"; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 474: "Eine innerliche Verbindung . . . bestand nicht"). It seems to me that a relationship between two deities that lasted through centuries can hardly have failed to become meaningful in the opinion of the pious.

Finally for men who believed in Asclepius, the god had a message not only when he deigned to restore them to life. Aristides avers his conviction that if the god were unwilling to help him, this would mean that he thought it time for him to die (T. 464b). In the opinion of the many, Asclepius was the judge of life and death (T. 453). As an umpire may disqualify a competitor from a contest, so Asclepius could disqualify an individual from life. In the worship of the healer of diseases, meaning was given to death; the decision of man's ultimate fate was not in the hands of blind fortune, but lay with divine providence. The god was all-powerful. If his assistance was not forthcoming, he was believed to have reasons for not acting in behalf of those who besought him, and men reconciled themselves to their destiny by acknowledging the superior judgment of Asclepius.¹⁸

Nor did the divine physician, it seems, entirely abandon his devotees in their last hour. To be sure, Asclepius barred from his sanctuaries those who were about to die (T. 488); for like all the other gods, he was afraid lest death might alloy his divine purity. None of the ancient deities remained near the dying. Hermes escorted the dead and Hades received them, but in the dire moments that precede death man was alone. One votary of Asclepius, however, and no less a one than Socrates, thought of this god when he was dying. His last words were: "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Pay it and do not neglect it" (T. 524).

The ancients were puzzled by the fact that Socrates upon taking leave of life should have felt himself in the debt of the god of medicine, of the healer of disease, and some people tried to laugh away the enigma. "Poor fellow," says Lucian (T. 525), "he drank hemlock before he had even paid the cock to Asclepius," as if Socrates had forgotten to offer a sacrifice which he had once promised to Asclepius, and in the face of death remembering his pledge had asked his friends to act in his stead. The Neo-Platonists, however, answered that Socrates, being a watchful and pious man, could not possibly have failed to give to the god what he had vowed to him on a previous occasion. It must have been in the moment of death, they rightly felt, that Socrates incurred his obligation to Asclepius (T. 527).¹⁹ Socrates, they therefore decided, was suppli-

¹⁸ The testimonies concerning Asclepius, the judge of life and death, are of late origin. That Artemidorus characterizes him in this way (T. 453) proves at least that this interpretation was quite common at the end of antiquity. On the other hand, it seems natural that death that was not averted by the god of medicine should have been considered as unavoidable. One will therefore not hesitate to ascribe this concept even to earlier periods.

¹⁹ The interpretation rejected by the Neo-Platonists is still considered probable by A. E. Taylor, *Socrates*, 1933, p. 119. However, one need only remember the beginning

cating the healer of disease because the soul in the process of generation becomes sick, and at the point of death needs help so as to become sound again (T. 526). Or it was believed that Socrates, in accordance with the advice of the Oracle, desired to return to his native land singing the paeon, since the soul dismissing its cares requires Asclepius' foresight (T. 527).²⁰

Thus Socrates' last words became fraught with deep meaning. The god who for people at large was the one who granted life and happiness in this world, for those initiated into philosophy was the one who opened the path into the Beyond, the one on whom they relied when the soul escaped from the prison of the body. Asclepius, says the Orphic Hymn (T. 601), the giver of gentle gifts, the savior, grants a good end to life. It may be that this Neo-Platonic or Orphic interpretation of Socrates' cryptic remark is correct. It may be that Socrates was not so much thinking of the healer of disease, that in his subtle irony he was invoking the reviver of the dead. For Socrates, life was death rather than illness, and death for him marked the beginning of real life.²¹ Thus he might well have thanked Asclepius because he was redeeming him from that death which is called life, and because he was restoring him to that life which is called death. Whatever its true intent, Socrates' vow to Asclepius became a watchword of later generations. When a new god asked for man's allegiance, philosophers recalled the last words of Socrates. They did not feel that they were in need of a new revelation. Asclepius led them to immortality and to the true life, just as Christ promised to do for his adherents.²²

of the *Phaedo* and Socrates' punctiliousness in fulfilling his obligations to Apollo, in order to agree with the Neo-Platonists that Socrates' vow could not possibly have concerned an event of the past.

²⁰ Modern commentators in general follow the Neo-Platonic lead, although they try to remove the tinge of Neo-Platonic philosophy. According to them, Socrates considered life a fitful fever from which he hoped to recover with the help of Asclepius; or he trusted to awaken, cured from the disease of life like those who recovered from their illness in the Asclepieia, cf. e.g. R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato*, 1894², p. 146; M. Wohlrab, *Platons Phaidon*, 1895, p. 158; J. Burnet, *Plato's Phaedo*, 1937, p. 118. Other interpretations are given by Wilamowitz, *Platon*, II, 1919, pp. 57 f.; J. Heiberg, *Danske Videnskabs Selskabs Forhandl.*, 1902, p. 106.

²¹ *Phaedo*, 64 A ff.

²² T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, 1923¹⁰, p. 337, has stressed the importance which Socrates' vow to Asclepius assumed in the discussion between the Christians and the pagans. T. 528 ff. show how much trouble the Church Fathers took in belittling Socrates' last words (only after the victory of Christianity did Prudentius give a fairer interpretation of Socrates' intent, though one colored by his Christian ideals; the philosopher, he says [T. 531], appealed to Asclepius so that "the god who attends patients may deign to be just to them when they are dying"). It is perhaps not amiss to point out that Socrates' sacrifice to Asclepius was obviously intended to be made when the jailor brought him the drink of hemlock; at that moment

7. ASCLEPIUS AND CHRIST

Asclepius was firmly entrenched in his position as one of the great and most popular ancient gods, when at last the struggle between paganism and Christianity ensued. That he possessed real power the Christians denied as little as they refused to acknowledge the reality and strength of the other heathen deities. Asclepius was able to heal, they admitted (T. 113; 332a). But, as was true of all those gods and goddesses whom they dared to oppose, they believed that Asclepius was weaker than their own Lord,¹ and they delighted in pointing out that unlike Christ, he could not "command the wicked spirit of one out of his senses to come out of the man" (T. 333). Nor did they have any doubts that Asclepius, the performer of miracles, used his might for evil purposes, that he was an evil spirit, one "who does not cure souls but destroys them" (T. 330). This too was one of the usual charges brought forward by Apologists and Church Fathers alike in regard to the hated divinities in which the Greeks and Romans believed.

Yet such common protestations, found over and over again in the preserved evidence, by no means exhaust the Christian polemics against Asclepius, nor do they touch upon the essentials of the argument over Asclepius that, especially in the beginnings of Christianity, raged between the propagators of the new creed and the defenders of the old religion. If one studies the testimony more carefully, one soon discerns behind the familiar accusations and invectives a tone of uneasiness, an apprehension which is not apparent in the Christian censure of Zeus or Apollo, of Hera or Athena. There are outbursts of singular bitterness, there is unequalled concern when the criticism turns to Asclepius. He is, says Lactantius, the archdemon (T. 849b). Tertullian goes so far as to call him "a beast, so dangerous to the world" (T. 103).² And Eusebius still claims that

Socrates wished to make an offering to "some god" (*Phaedo*, 117 B ἀποσπεῖσαι τινι). But as the warden tells him, the whole drink is required to effect death. Socrates therefore omits the libation. But is it not likely that he is already thinking of Asclepius, to whom as he later says "we owe a cock," and that this most common gift to the god is meant to take the place of the libation which Socrates himself could not offer? Socrates' sacrifice, then, would be connected with his "last supper"; he certainly considers the drink a meal of which it was customary to dedicate a share to the gods, especially to Zeus the Savior, or to the Good Daemon. These circumstances would make the offering seem even more offensive to the Christians.

¹ For this attitude of the Christians toward the pagan deities, cf. A. D. Nock, *Sallustius*, 1926, p. LXXIX, n. 177.

² For the interpretation of this passage and the attitude of the Latin Apologists toward Asclepius, cf. Th. Lefort, *Musée Belge*, IX, 1905, pp. 212 ff. Incidentally, the fact that the serpent was the typical symbol of Asclepius, that he himself appeared in the form of a snake, as Arnobius points out at length (T. 852), may have contributed

he is the one who draws men away from their true Savior (T. 818). It seems that the Christians themselves realized that in Asclepius they faced their strongest enemy, the most dangerous antagonist of their Master.³

Why should they have been of this opinion? Simply because the Asclepius worship in the Christian era had spread all over the world and was a living force, whereas other cults, even if still respected, had lost much of their former hold over the imagination and the hearts of men? This fact may have contributed to their rancor against Asclepius, but it hardly explains their preoccupation with him. Nor is it likely that they feared Asclepius so intensely because like Christ he was a savior—most of the gods of late antiquity were called saviors, though it may be true that Asclepius was honored with this title more often than any of his divine associates. The decisive reason for the disquiet aroused in Christian writers by Asclepius lay in the fact that in the early Gospel Jesus appeared as a physician, as a healer of diseases. It was such an interpretation of the new god's mission that made him resemble Asclepius, the god of medicine, more than any other pagan divinity. It was the similarity between the deeds of Christ and of Asclepius that was bound to heighten the controversy between the Christian faith and the Asclepius religion.⁴

to the Christians' dislike of this god and may have made it easy for them to see in him the incarnation of the Devil. But the true reasons for their opposition to the god of medicine lie much deeper.

³ With this statement I do not intend to take sides in the discussion regarding the influence which Oriental religions had in halting or obstructing the progress of Christianity. Their resistance against the new faith is usually seen as the strongest counterforce, e. g. Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 504. But whatever the power of the cults of Mithras and Isis in the third century and later, in the first two centuries of our era the Greek cults were uppermost in the consideration of Christian writers; cf. *The Cambridge Mediaeval History*, I, 1924, p. 92. Moreover, the actual balance of power is only one of the factors to be taken into account by the interpreter. There was also a spiritual fight. The new creed had to defend its tenets against those of the other sects, and it is worth asking to what extent any of the earlier religious concepts were dangerous to the novel dogma because of their similarity to the Christian teaching, or because in certain points they seemed even superior. It is this clash of ideas with which I am mainly concerned, and it is in this struggle over values that Asclepius, as will become clear from the interpretation of the testimonies, appeared as *the* antagonist of Christ. It is impossible, of course, to discuss the subject in full here, and every attempt at giving a general picture of the situation necessarily involves a certain arbitrariness, the more so since in the first centuries there was no unified Christian dogma to which one could refer—yet the main facts can certainly be established.

⁴ The fact that Asclepius stood in the foreground of the discussion between pagans and Christians has been noted by some modern scholars, cf. e. g. Thraemer, *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1662, 11 ff. But it was only through A. v. Harnack's study *Medicinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte*, 1892, pp. 89 ff., that the debate was set in its proper perspective. Harnack showed that Christ at first was seen as a physician and as such compared to Asclepius; he attempted to illustrate "the extent to which the Gospel in the earliest Christendom was preached as medicine and Jesus as a Physician, and how

For there was no question: Jesus' achievements when healing the lame and the paralytic and when resurrecting the dead were similar to those of Asclepius, even identical with them (T. 94). Therefore the heathens could compare the blessings bestowed by Christ to those bestowed by Asclepius (T. 584), they could even claim: what Jesus does, he does "in the name of the god Asclepius" (T. 334). The only answer left to the Christians beset by such contentions was the affirmation: "When they learned about the prophecies to the effect that He would heal every disease and would raise the dead, they brought forward Asclepius" (T. 332), or, "when the Devil brings forward Asclepius as the raiser of the dead and the healer of the other diseases, he has imitated the prophecies about Christ" (T. 95).⁵ However, if from the Christian point of view Asclepius had come into the world to cheat men out of their salvation by his miracles (T. 818), to the heathens Christ naturally seemed but another Asclepius.⁶

To be sure, despite the similarity of the two physicians, fundamental differences existed between them. That which was revolutionary in Christ, that which was novel and unheard-of did not find any correspondence in Asclepius: Jesus came to heal not only the sick in body and soul; he extended his help to "the sinners and publicans." Asclepius, as a Greek god, had rejected those who were impure, those who did not think holy thoughts. In this respect—and the distinction was a crucial one, for it set Christianity apart from paganism—Asclepius and Christ were at variance.⁷ Yet, just because the heathens were reluctant to accept the new

the Christian Message was really comprehended by the Gentiles as a medicinal religion"; cf. *id.*, *History of Dogma*, transl. by N. Buchanan, I, 1901, p. 147, n. 1; cf. also *Expansion of Christianity*, pp. 121 ff., where the matter is discussed in a "fresh version." Harnack has also pointed out that reference to Asclepius as the "Soter κατ' ἐξοχήν" (cf. e.g. Thraemer, *ibid.*) is not enough to explain the controversy between the followers of Asclepius and of Christ, rightly stressing the fact that Zeus and Apollo at that time were also addressed as saviors. Among the few who have considered or elaborated Harnack's thesis is S. Angus, *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World*, 1929, pp. 414 ff.

⁵ Justinus' mode of reasoning is typical of the Christian conviction that whatever the prophecies of the Bible, the Devil will try to match them. Consequently the deeds of Asclepius were understood as an attempt to nullify the deeds of Christ.

⁶ The significance of Asclepius' "glorious deeds" has been analyzed above, pp. 114 f., where it has also been pointed out that such a demonstration of the existence of the divine is not unlike the one sanctioned by the New Testament. It is interesting to note for how long a time the parallel Christ-Asclepius was remembered. Alcuin still calls Asclepius the false Christ, the "Scolapius falsator" (T. 336a). And when the purism of renaissance humanism forbade the use of words foreign to classical Latin, the name of Asclepius, or that of Apollo, was used to designate Christ; cf. E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, II, 1923, p. 776, n. 1.

⁷ K. Holl, *Die Antike*, I, 1925, p. 166, rightly insists on this point which was perhaps not sufficiently emphasized in Harnack's analysis.

dogma that God would commune with sinners and would heal them, they clung the more steadfastly to Asclepius, who had achieved the same as Christ without adopting an attitude so repulsive to the ancients, without even demanding faith from his adherents.⁸ The Christians, on the other hand, had to attack Asclepius all the more violently.

Still, to find fault with him was difficult indeed. The usual incriminations against the pagan divinities were of no avail in regard to Asclepius. In his case, it was impossible to brand the absurd notion that God should be one of the cosmic elements; Asclepius had never been identified with any of them. Nor could one dwell on the immorality of the myth attached to Asclepius; the tales recounted about him were unobjectionable.⁹ On the contrary, in addition to the similarity of the deeds of the two saviors, which even the later Christians seem to have found disconcerting,¹⁰ there was a disturbing resemblance in their way of life and in their characters. Christ did not perform heroic or wordly exploits; he fought no battles; he concerned himself solely with assisting those who were in need of succor. So did Asclepius. Christ, like Asclepius, was sent into the world as a helper of men. Christ's life on earth was blameless, as was that of Asclepius.¹¹ Christ in his love of men invited his patients to come to him, or else he wandered about to meet them. This, too, could be said of Asclepius.¹² All in all, it is not astonishing that Apologists and Church

⁸ The matter is summed up in the debate between Celsus and Origenes (*e. g.* T. 292 f.; 332a), but apparently was also discussed in Porphyry's book *Against the Christians*, *e. g.* T. 506; cf. in general Harnack, *Expansion*, p. 130; Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 168; T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, 1923¹⁰, pp. 239 ff.

⁹ Concerning the physical interpretation of Asclepius' godhead, cf. above, p. 78 and p. 105. Only once is Asclepius referred to as a sun-god when the belief in such deities is discussed in general by Eusebius (T. 298). For the dislike which Christians and "true" pagans felt in regard to the equation of gods with elements, cf. Nock, *op. cit.*, pp. XLIII; XLVII. That the traditional mythology, to the Christian Fathers, seemed the most vulnerable point of paganism has been stressed by G. Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, 1912, pp. 167-8.

¹⁰ To be sure, after the Christian dogma had been more fully elaborated, the figure of Christ assumed significance beyond that of a mere healer. Yet Eusebius (*Hist. Ecc.*, X, 4, 11) still said of Jesus that "like the medical man He sees terrible sights, touches unpleasant things, and the misfortunes of others bring a harvest of sorrows that are peculiarly His." This characterization is taken from Hippocrates, *Περὶ φύσων* (*C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 91, 5-7); cf. J. Ilberg, *Berl. Phil. Woch.*, 1893, pp. 402 f. In exactly the same words the healing of the god Asclepius had been depicted (T. 392). I should also draw attention to the fact that the name *Iason* in the Hellenizing period was often taken as the Greek analogon of Jesus and that the word Jesus was derived from the same root as *Iason*, namely *ἰᾶσθαι*, even by Eusebius; cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v. Jesus, VIII, p. 374.

¹¹ For Asclepius' character and "heroic" deeds, cf. above, pp. 38 ff.; 73 f. Concerning his mission as a helper of men, cf. above, p. 121. Just as Asclepius had been sent by Apollo, so Christ had been sent by God in his *φιλανθρωπία* (*Ep. ad Titum*, 3, 4; cf. also John, 3, 16).

¹² Cf. above, p. 112. Compare moreover T. 406 with Matthew, 11, 28: "Come unto

Fathers had a hard stand in their fight against Asclepius, in proving the superiority of Jesus, if moral reasoning alone was to be relied upon.

Nor were the metaphysical or theological problems fewer or less cumbersome for the followers of Christ than they were for the supporters of Asclepius. The nature of the godhead of the two saviors was indisputably identical: both were man-gods. Like Asclepius, Christ was the son of God and of a mortal woman. The story of Christ's birth in many details resembled the birth saga of the divine Asclepius.¹³ Jesus had died, not through God to be sure, but through men, as the Christians rightly insisted (T. 112). Yet through God he had risen to heaven, as had Asclepius. Some of the early Christians even thought that their Master had been made immortal on account of his virtue. The same had been asserted of Asclepius.¹⁴ Justinus certainly was most convincing to the heathens when he urged them with reference to Asclepius to believe in Christ because they had believed in the divinity of sons of their own gods (T. 335). Nor was it easy for the Christians to refuse assent to the godhead of Asclepius when they were asked by the pagans to admit his divinity (T. 8; 234). Moreover, Asclepius acted as son of Apollo; Christ came in the name of his Father.¹⁵ The speculations concerning the Christian Trinity were dangerously near to the speculations concerning Asclepius, the third from Zeus (T. 303). While Christ was human and divine at the same time, Asclepius was called a terrestrial and intelligible god (T. 259).¹⁶

me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Concerning Christ's seeking men and not waiting for them, cf. also Holl, *loc. cit.*, p. 167. C. Bonner (*Harvard Theological Review*, XXX, 1937, p. 123), has rightly pointed to the fact that the belief in Asclepius' providence is similar to that in the providence of Christ.

¹³ For Asclepius as a man-god, cf. above, p. 77. For Christian parallels with the Asclepius birth legend, cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 308, n. 3.

¹⁴ Cf. above, pp. 75 ff. Paulus of Samosata (third century A.D.) said of Christ: ἐκ προκοπῆς θεοποιήσθαι; cf. J. H. Kurtz, *Lehrb. d. Kirchengesch.*, I, 1892, p. 135; cf. also Porphyry's statement (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 23): "The gods have declared Christ to have been most pious; he has become immortal, and by them his memory is cherished. Whereas the Christians are a polluted sect, contaminated and enmeshed in error"; cf. *The Cambridge Mediaeval History*, I, p. 94.

¹⁵ Dyer, *Greek Gods*, p. 240, claims that the Romans were wont to address Asclepius as *filius dei*. I am unable to substantiate this claim. But this much is certain: Asclepius even in Epidaurus acted together with Apollo, his father, cf. above, p. 99, and T. 428, where the priest Diophantus invokes Asclepius "in the name of your father," a passage also referred to by Dyer, *ibid.*

¹⁶ It is Aristides who speaks of Asclepius as the third from Zeus. Discussions of three kinds of providence or of three different gods were current among the Neo-Pythagoreans and the Platonists of the first and second centuries A.D.; cf. F. Ueberweg-K. Prächter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 1926, pp. 556; 521; 542. The influence of these schools on patristic literature is certain, cf. *ibid.*, p. 556. It is usually overlooked that Asclepius had taken his place in the pagan "trinity" at such an early date. On the other hand, the characterization of Asclepius as a terrestrial and intelligible god is already to be found in Artemidorus. Again this concept must have been widely current in the second century A.D.

It may be that the Christian dogma was to a certain extent responsible for the claim of the later Neo-Platonists that Asclepius had been begotten by his father in the world, but that nevertheless he had been eternally existing by his father's side before the universe was made (T. 305). The important fact is that with regard to Asclepius such a reconciliation was in line with earlier beliefs and not merely an artifice.¹⁷ Heathens and Christians were faced with the same difficulties in defining the position of their gods. They had to be Homooousians or Homoiousians, Monophysites or Nestorians. In short, the similarity between Asclepius and Christ was deep-rooted; it was founded in the very essence of the two figures. In the historical process that had shaped and reshaped the concept of Asclepius this god had become an anticipation, as it were, of Christ who was to be proclaimed to men.¹⁸

This truth the Christians themselves, it seems, were willing to recognize as soon as they learned to admit that the pagans had not been entirely deprived of the light of knowledge, that in fact an inkling of truth was given even to them, that the natural revelation had foreshadowed the clearer and truer Revelation of the Bible. Some of the great Christian teachers, at least, did no longer regard Asclepius as an evil spirit, invented by the Devil to be the false Christ; rather did they find in him and in his teaching the enigmatic prediction of Christ and of his message, as they now began to understand it. For as Clement says: "And we must adapt ourselves to Him through the divine charity, so that we may see the like through the like, listening to the truth of the word without fraud and purely after the manner of the children who obey us. And that is what he referred to as in a riddle, whoever he was, who inscribed over the entrance of the temple of Epidaurus: 'Pure must be he who enters the fragrant temple; purity means to think nothing but holy thoughts.' And 'except ye become as little children ye shall not enter in the kingdom of heaven.' For there is the sanctuary of God, set up over the three foundation-stones, Faith, Hope, Charity" (T. 336).¹⁹ It is true, Christianity

¹⁷ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 279, has claimed a dependence of the Neo-Platonists (Julian) on the Christian dogma. On the other hand, he asserts (*ibid.*, p. 234): "... and when at last vanquished by Christianity it [the Asclepius cult] left its impress on the vanquisher." Farnell does not give an account of those similarities which he has in mind.

¹⁸ In this connection I should also draw attention to Asclepius' ethical teachings and to his relation to the Mysteries, cf. above, pp. 125 ff.

¹⁹ Bernays, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 f., has noted Clement's praise of the Epidaurian inscription, but has failed to draw any conclusion as to the relation between Christianity and Asclepius religion. Clement was deeply influenced by Musonius, cf. H. Lietzmann, *Christl. Literatur, Gercke-Norden*, I, 5, 1923, p. 7; and it was Musonius' definition of the nature of God that seemed characteristic of the religious beliefs of the post-classical centuries, cf. above, p. 114.

and Asclepius religion, despite the many features which they had in common, were not identical. That which formed the essence of the new faith was unique.²⁰ And yet, as far as Christianity can be compared at all to any of the Greek and Roman cults, the Asclepius ideal seems nearest to the ideal of Christ. The Greek god of medicine was the most accomplished precursor of the god of a higher Gospel that paganism had brought forth.²¹

From his humble position as a friend of Chiron, Asclepius had risen to be a symbol of human daring; he had become the patron of physicians; he had assumed divine prerogatives and in an unparalleled triumph secured for himself a foremost place among the deities of old. When Christianity was made the religion of the state, Asclepius, so the Christians charged, was still revered in secret corners, and libations and prayers were still offered to him (T. 51). Of all the Greek gods he persisted longest in exercising his full and undiminished power.²² For he had been the embodiment of the highest expectations which men cherished, of the highest values which they had known before the ancient world was shattered and a new world was built in which men lived for other hopes and other virtues.

²⁰ Holl, *op. cit.*, pp. 162 ff., especially 166, has rightly shown that it is impossible to explain Christianity by comparing it to other religions, by adducing historical parallels which, however close, fall short of making the new message understandable.

²¹ In recent discussions the similarity of the Heracles figure and that of Christ has been underlined, cf. F. Pfister, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, XXXIV, 1937, pp. 42 ff. But the resemblance between the Savior Heracles and the Savior Christ, between the man-god Heracles and the man-god Christ, concerns external facts, while that between Christ and Asclepius covers essential features, the spiritual meaning of the teaching. Of course, there were many more religions against which Christianity had to fight and by which it may have been influenced in turn (cf. above, n. 3), yet, it would be difficult, I think, to adduce testimonies from any other religion that show such comprehensive similarities as are to be found in the evidence concerning Asclepius. For the supposed identity of early artistic representations of Christ with those of Asclepius, cf. below, p. 224, n. 18.

²² Cf. M. Besnier, *L'Ile Tibérine*, 1902, pp. 240 ff., who cites various Christian authors attesting the popularity of Asclepius in late centuries. Cf. also below, pp. 255 ff.

III. TEMPLE MEDICINE

Thus far, in the discussion of Asclepius and of the history of his worship mythological and religious problems have stood in the foreground. Only occasionally has reference been made to the practical aspect of the cult, to the miracle cures which the god performed in behalf of those who implored his help. Important as Asclepius' function may have been in giving oracles, in safeguarding the family, in preserving the order of the cosmos,¹ it was his dream healings which in antiquity constituted his greatest claim to fame. In recent times, on the other hand, the fact that Asclepius indulged in what seems to have been mere trickery forms the cornerstone of the criticism heaped upon the god himself and upon those who believed in him. The condemnation of divine healing, of temple medicine, is usually accompanied by high praise for the achievement of Greek physicians; a sharp dividing line is drawn between the religious beliefs, or delusions, of the ancients and their scientific accomplishments.²

Such an antagonism of science and religion may be self-evident to the modern mind, yet it was foreign to ancient thought. Especially in medicine, divine and human knowledge and action, though of a different nature, did not exclude each other. To be sure, in sickness people first took recourse to human physicians. The scope of their competence, however, was limited. There are cases so desperate, diseases so grave, the doctors themselves admitted, that human endeavor fights them in vain. Still, the divinity may be able and willing to help. It is not only the right, but almost the duty of everyone to ask for divine assistance where human power fails.³ Greek physicians never opposed religious medicine, much as they abhorred magic. Consequently, the Asclepius cult was a friendly ally rather than a hated enemy of the medical art.

Moreover, one must not forget that the god of incubations continued to be the patron of physicians, the guardian of their craft. Just as of old

¹ Cf. above, pp. 104 ff.

² Cf. *e. g.* Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 231, and above, pp. 109; 117.

³ Cf. *e. g.* Hippocrates, *C. M. G.*, I, 1, p. 27, 13 ff.; II, p. 289 [Loeb]: "Physicians have given place to the gods. For in medicine that which is powerful is not in excess." Cf. Edelstein, *Bull. of the Inst. of the Hist. of Med.*, V, 1937, pp. 243 ff. That the attitude of later physicians did not differ from that of early doctors is shown by statements of Rufus (T. 425) and Galen (*e. g.* T. 436). In general, cf. also Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 149 ff.

doctors had venerated the hero Asclepius, so later they honored the god of Epidaurus (T. 338 f.). To him, they offered sacrifices according to their ancient custom (T. 552); for him, they staged processions (T. 568) and games (T. 573). He was the protector of their guilds.⁴ He remained the founder of their art (T. 341), the inspirer of their science (T. 468). Although Asclepius was now a healer in his own right, he still presided over the medical art (T. 342 ff.); he still was the leader of medicine (T. 340); physicians still were called Asclepiads, and nobody who was not a good doctor, could properly carry this name (T. 346 f.).⁵

That this was so, also explains why men, despite their preoccupation with the deeds of the god who was sought in his temples, did not cease to speculate on his share in the development of scientific medicine. The old saga saw in Asclepius the savior from death.⁶ Later, his attainments were specified more in detail. Many were of the opinion that Asclepius had really been the first physician, the first to study medicine (T. 350 ff.). Or the view was held that Apollo had invented medicine and had imparted his art to his son who, as his earthly representative, had introduced it among men (T. 344; 356 f.).⁷ The more scholarly assumption was that Asclepius had improved upon medicine, but had done so in such a measure that he was regarded as its inventor (T. 355). Medical knowledge was supposed to have no absolute beginning; men had always been familiar with some drugs, some methods of healing, and medicine as taught by Asclepius was certainly not a creation out of nothing.⁸ It was a refinement of a crude art already existing that Asclepius had brought about (T. 354); his knowledge, though great, was in no way complete,

⁴ For medical guilds in later times, cf. E. Ziebarth, *Das griechische Vereinswesen*, 1896, pp. 96 ff.; Poland, *Geschichte d. griech. Vereinswesens*, pp. 514 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Berufsvereine, Suppl. IV, pp. 176 f. Concerning medical schools and Asclepius, cf. also R. Herzog, *S.B. Berl.*, 1935, p. 1006. Guilds were based on a religious foundation, as were all associations in antiquity (cf. Wilamowitz, *Gesellschaft*, pp. 52 f.), even though this fact may have been of little practical consequence; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, p. 202, 24 ff.

⁵ As the leader of medicine, Asclepius was also the patron of certain cities which were famous for their medical art (T. 345). For Asclepius as symbol of medicine, cf. T. 467-81.

⁶ Cf. above, p. 45.

⁷ Asclepius is given here a task which, according to Aristides, was that of his sons: the promulgation of medicine all over the earth (T. 282, 11 ff.). In late speculation, of course, Apollo as the originator of Asclepius' knowledge was replaced by Oriental gods (T. 358). Proclus ascribed divine medicine to Asclepius, while he regarded mortals as the representatives of medicine resulting from theory and experience (T. 312; cf. 381).

⁸ Such a theory is probably influenced by Peripatetic speculations. The Peripatetics held that the beginnings of all arts and crafts were unknown. Their so-called inventors were men whose names happened to be the first to be remembered, but who actually had done no more than bring about a decisive progress, cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448 b 27 ff. (Homer); Theophrastus, *Doxographi Graeci* [Diels], p. 475, 10 ff. (Thales).

it could be extended by later generations (T. 349).⁹ Likewise, it was maintained that Asclepius had transformed the experience of men before him into a rational system (T. 356). Or it was believed that he had established scientific medicine by teaching that the opposing qualities which constitute the human body should be balanced and reconciled (T. 348).¹⁰

More specifically, Asclepius was reputed to have invented surgery and pharmacology (T. 355), in fact the oldest branches of medicine.¹¹ Or the discoveries of empirical medicine (T. 359) and of bedside medicine (T. 360) were ascribed to him. He was even considered the representative of dietetic medicine (T. 361).¹² Certain cures, too, were traced to him: that of chronic diseases (T. 364), such as gout and consumption. Certain remedies and drugs were believed to be his findings (T. 365 ff.). And if not Asclepius, the god of Epidaurus, at least one of the three Asclepii distinguished in antiquity was credited with inventing the extraction of teeth, with the first use of purges, with the introduction of instruments and other medical means, such as the probe and surgical bandages (T. 379).¹³

The medical achievements of Asclepius, then, did not consist solely in his performance of miracles. He was also a scientist; his contribution extended from the discovery of slight medical details to that of whole departments of medicine, even to that of the art itself. This is the typical picture of the patron of a craft. In the same way, Daedalus was viewed as the inventor of tools needed by the artist, but he was also considered the discoverer of sculpture and architecture, the founder of the fine arts in general.¹⁴ In turning to an investigation of the divine healing, as it was practiced by Asclepius throughout the centuries, one must keep in mind that this god was himself a physician, the protector of medicine, as it was developed by Hippocrates, by Herophilus, by Galen, and by many others famous in the history of science.

⁹ Similarly the medical knowledge of Machaon and Podalirius is sometimes called imperfect in the sense that it was adequate only for their own age (T. 145).

¹⁰ In passing it should be noted that Asclepius was also considered the healer of animals (T. 378).

¹¹ Cf. T. 142 f. According to Plautus (T. 362), the doctor sets a broken leg for Asclepius—apparently Asclepius, the surgeon.

¹² Curiously enough, Asclepius does not seem to have understood anything of obstetrics (T. 363). This may have some connection with the fact that birth could not take place in his temples (T. 498).

¹³ Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, p. 79, n. 52) is not correct in branding such statements as T. 379 as "Abgeschmacktheit der Theologen." Probably the various achievements attributed to Asclepius were treated in the literature *περὶ εὐρημάτων*; on this topic, cf. A. Kleingünther, *Philologus*, Suppl., XXVI, 1, 1933, pp. 143 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Daedalos, IV, pp. 2004, 26 ff.; 2005, 31 ff.; 2006, 8 ff.

1. MODERN EXPLANATIONS OF TEMPLE CURES

When in the seventeenth century the testimonies concerning Asclepius' healings were for the first time critically examined by Meibom, a doctor who was a philologist and historian as well, he did not hesitate to accept the reality of Asclepius' cures at their face value.¹ To him, they were miracles; they were not, in a rational sense, medicine from which physicians could learn anything worth their while. Moreover, in Meibom's opinion, these miracles were deeds of the Devil, and being a Protestant, he could not desist from sneering at the Catholics in whose churches; as he charged, the saints repeated the deception of the pagan demons.²

Such a naive attitude toward the miraculous, reminiscent of that of the early Christians, was still almost universal in Meibom's time. It began to change slowly as Descartes' philosophy permeated natural sciences.³ Around the middle of the eighteenth century, scholars in general no longer accepted the assumption that God's omnipotence, or the interference of demons, would make itself felt in supernatural actions contrary to common human experience, and this destruction of the belief in the self-evidence of miracles necessarily gave rise to the question how the healings of Asclepius had been brought about. That neither God nor Satan had performed them seemed a foregone conclusion. Men alone were responsible for the treatment given. The issue was: what procedure had they followed?

At first, the success of the cures was explained by the application of natural remedies, no matter what the pretenses made by patients and priests might have been.⁴ But soon, a different interpretation was proffered. The miracles of the ancient god of medicine were taken as the first evidence of the efficacy of animal magnetism and somnambulism. Asclepius, or rather his priests, were considered forerunners of Mesmer, whose theories they seemed to have anticipated in their practices. Against such a claim, which made Asclepius a representative of the occult sciences, rationalistic philologists and theologians protested violently. They asserted that animal magnetism was unknown in antiquity, and at

¹ H. Meibom, *Exercitatio philologico-medica de incubatione*, etc., 1659.

² Cf. S. Herrlich, *Antike Wunderkuren*, *Wiss. Beilage z. Jahresber. d. Humboldt-Gymnasiums zu Berlin*, 1911, pp. 3-5; from Herrlich's survey of the early interpretations of the cures of Asclepius (pp. 3 ff.) I have drawn most of the material for my discussion of the subject.

³ Cf. W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 1923, p. 132.

⁴ Cf. e.g. K. F. Hundertmark, *De incrementis artis medicae*, etc., 1749; Daniel Le Clerc, *Histoire de la Médecine*, I, 1729, pp. 64 ff.

the same time condemned incubations as impostures, as fantastic as somnambulism.⁵

The spiritists were not abashed by these strictures. Even in the nineteenth century they continued to regard Asclepius as one of their own kind.⁶ Moreover, some scientists, accepting the correctness of the ancient reports, attempted to account for the healings performed by the neurotic disposition of the patients; they pointed to the influence which the soul has over the body. Humanists stressed the power of religious experience as a curative factor. The sick were healed, they contended, since they believed in divine help.⁷ On the other hand, the number of those was increasing who thought that the cures of Asclepius had been without real success, mere charlatanry, the machination of clever priests who pretended that their ignorant contrivances were the work of a god, because they hoped in this way to raise the revenues of their temples.⁸

No unanimity of interpretation had been reached when in 1883 the scanty material on which the interpretation of the cures had been based so far—it had been composed in the main of Roman inscriptions and of the orations of Aristides—was greatly increased by archaeological discoveries. The Epidaurian tablets were published.⁹ They seemed unrestrictedly to confirm the verdict of the sceptical scientists. It was now obvious to all that these so-called cures had been trickery and mere fraud.¹⁰

But again a reaction set in. First it was stated that the Epidaurian inscriptions could not be taken as evidence of the therapy actually performed in the temples of Asclepius; they were considered typical miracle stories, such as are to be found in all religions. The real cures, it was claimed, at all times consisted of the interpretation of dreams, which was provided by priests who were trained in medicine and who

⁵ F. A. Wolff, *Beitr. z. Gesch. d. Somnambulismus aus dem Altertum*, 1787 (*Miscell. Halae*, 1802, pp. 283-430); J. F. A. Kinderling, *Der Somnambulismus unserer Zeit mit der Inkubation . . . in Vergleich gestellt . . .*, 1788. Cf. also Herrlich, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶ Literature of this type has been collected by Welcker (*Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 152). A late echo of the theory of somnambulism is to be found in C. du Prel, *Die Mystik der alten Griechen*, 1888, pp. 1 ff.

⁷ For the scientific theory, cf. A. Gauthier, *Recherches historiques sur l'exercice de la médecine dans les temples chez les peuples de l'antiquité*, 1844; for the humanistic one, cf. Welcker, *op. cit.*, III, p. 124; he finds in Aristides an attitude similar to that of pietism.

⁸ E. g. Ritter von Rittershain, *Der medizinische Wunderglaube und die Inkubation im Altertum*, 1878.

⁹ P. Kabbadias, *Ephem. Arch.*, 1883, pp. 197 ff.

¹⁰ Most emphatic was the verdict of H. Diels (*Nord und Süd*, 1888, pp. 29 ff.); cf. also S. Reinach, *Daremberg-Saglio, s. v. medicus*, III, 2, p. 1671; J. Heiberg, *Gesch. d. Mathematik u. Naturwissenschaften im Altertum*, p. 97 (*Aus Natur u. Geisteswelt*); cf. also Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 231.

determined the treatment in accordance with rational procedures.¹¹ Later it was emphasized that, even though the temple of Epidauros was given to deceitful miracles, other temples, like those of Cos and Pergamum, relied mainly on the help of physicians and on the benefit of a watering-place, together with a sound interpretation of the dreams of the patients. The miracle, as far as it was admitted to have come into play at all, was explained in accordance with the laws of hypnosis and suggestion or autosuggestion.¹² Finally the attempt was made to distinguish different periods of temple medicine which were characterized by different methods of healing: in pre-Roman centuries the god was supposed to have worked as the typical performer of miracles; but in the course of time he was believed to have become more rational, "he learned medicine"; the temples themselves became sanatoria; the dreams were cleverly interpreted so as to fit in with the other prescriptions; thus at least the cures brought about at the end of antiquity could be likened to modern scientific treatment.¹³

In all these more recent theories the priests of Asclepius—and there is hardly any doubt expressed that they were the main actors of the play—were no longer conceived of as tricksters; the deceitful priests had become good and benevolent physicians themselves. While it had once been assumed that laical medicine had been derived from clerical medicine, the latter now seemed dependent upon the former. The miracle, a dish so distasteful to the modern palate, had been cooked until it became acceptable and digestible; the irrational had been worked on until it finally evaporated into nothingness; the amoral had been sifted until it had cleared off a useful and orderly substance. Only a few scholars still dared to insist that from beginning to end the cures of Asclepius to the ancients had been a religious experience beyond all human understanding, and must be interpreted as such.¹⁴ They were silenced, however, by their opponents' clamoring for a natural explanation of the phenomena in question.

¹¹ Cf. Thraemer, *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1686, 5 ff.; especially p. 1690, 8 ff.

¹² Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 37, first contrasted the "schwindelhafte Kurpfuscherei" of Epidauros with the treatment given at Cos and Cnidus. R. Herzog, *Koische Forschungen und Funde*, 1899, pp. 202 ff., elaborated this view; cf. also *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 139 ff. The explanation of the miracles along the lines of modern psychological theories is outlined by Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, pp. 67 ff.). O. Hirschberg, *Geschichte der Augenheilkunde*, 1899, p. 56, speaks of a "Vereinigung von Lourdes und Karlsbad."

¹³ This distinction of different periods is implied by Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 110 ff.; cf. also J. Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, XV, 1905, p. 8, 2 (*N. Jahrb. f. Pädagogik*, IV, 1901, pp. 309; 312) and the same, *Abh. Akad. Leipz.*, XLI, 1, 1930, p. 32: "Der Gott hat offenbar Medizin studiert, man sieht den Einfluss der Wissenschaft auf die Tempelpraxis um 100 nach Chr."

¹⁴ Cf. Th. Lefort, *Musée Belge*, IX, 1905, pp. 197 ff.; Herrlich, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

From the modern point of view this demand is quite justified. Yet, it would not be improper to say that the healings of Asclepius are attested by witnesses of the events; that even though today miracles of this kind no longer occur, they may have occurred in antiquity, that they are historical facts just like many others which have to be accepted as true because their truth cannot be disproved. This was the attitude of the greatest among the rationalists of the Enlightenment in regard to the miracle cures of Christ.¹⁵ It is the attitude of the pragmatic philosopher toward those who in our time claim that they are healed by their god. He acknowledges the reality of their experience, for it is proved by its practical fruits.¹⁶ This should be the attitude of everybody who recognizes experience as the only criterion of truth, for he has no standard by which to contradict other people's experience. That the cures of Asclepius need any explanation in natural terms can be upheld only by the assumption on which the question was first founded in the eighteenth century: that God does not exist, or if He exists, that He never interferes in the affairs of this world. It is only on the basis of this hypothesis that one can and must ask how the patients of Asclepius got well if it was not the god who cured them.

2. ANCIENT REPORTS ON INCUBATION

Before attempting to pronounce judgment, before choosing between the various solutions proposed since the first critical examination of the testimony was undertaken, or suggesting another explanation if the older theories should prove inadequate, it is necessary to find out as exactly as possible what actually happened in the Asclepieia. This, to be sure, is not an easy task, or one which can be approached without hesitation. Not that there is any lack of material. Reports referring to healings from the fifth century down to the end of antiquity are preserved. But they are hardly of a kind that would seem satisfactory.¹

Among the literary sources two comic poets have most to tell: Ari-

¹⁵ Cf. Lessing, *Sämmtliche Schriften*, X, 1839, p. 36 [Lachmann].

¹⁶ Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures IV and V.

¹ Concerning temple medicine in general and incubations in particular, cf. Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 89 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1686 ff.; cf. also *ibid.*, the articles *Incubatio* and *Mantik*; R. Caton, *Two Lectures on the Temples and Rituals of Asklepios* (*Otia Merceiana*, I, 1899); Walton, *Asklepios*, Ch. 5; L. Deubner, *De Incubatione*, Diss. Berl., 1900; M. Hamilton, *Incubation*, 1906; Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 76 ff.; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, *passim*; C. R. Simboli, *Disease spirits and divine cures among the Greeks and Romans*, Diss. New York, 1921, pp. 57 ff.; cf. also W. R. Halliday, *On the Treatment of Disease in Antiquity*, in *Greek Poetry and Life*, Essays presented to Gilbert Murray, 1936, pp. 277 ff.

stophanes, the oldest witness of the cures of Asclepius (T. 420 f.), and Plautus, who is following a Greek original of the third century B. C. (T. 429 f.);² the one deals with what was going on in Athens, the other with the happenings in the temple at Epidaurus. It can hardly be expected that these authors should give a picture of the situation satisfying to the curiosity of the scholar or to be accepted without making allowance for poetic fantasy and comic license. On the other hand, Aristides' orations on Asclepius (*e. g.* T. 317) and his many casual remarks about the god's power, as it manifested itself mainly in Pergamum, are the utterances of a man who was a staunch believer, a partisan of Asclepius. He is pre-occupied with his own troubles. Hundreds of details which he gives, important as they may have been for himself, are of little interest for others, and naturally he is inclined to praise the god who helped him, rather than to investigate the divine doings.³ Aelian knows of many cures performed by the god (T. 455 f.); but he is a bigot, if not a hypocrite, who pretends to see the hand of divine providence in everything, in the sublime no less than in the trivial, and he finds it sufficient to proclaim the achievements of the god without expounding their particulars.⁴ The statements of the Neo-Platonists, of men like Julian and Marinus (*e. g.* T. 462; 445 f.), are certainly honest, but they are written during a period not distinguished by its sense of criticism, nor are these philosophers given to fact-finding.⁵

As regards the inscriptions, they abound in details and tell at length about Asclepius' actions, but they are open to suspicion as to their objectivity. The most important among them are the ones found in Epidaurus: a whole set of stories (T. 423), which were inscribed on columns placed in such a way that everybody who came to the temple was attracted by them. They constitute almost an official record of the

² For the Aristophanes passage, cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 95 ff.; for Plautus, cf. Thraemer, *Pauly-Wissowa*, II, p. 1688.

³ The literature on Aristides is very extensive. Of older interpretations that of Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 114 ff., is still most valuable. Of more recent critics, cf. Weinreich, *N. Jahrb.*, XXXIII, 1914, pp. 597 ff.; A. Boulanger, *Aelius Aristide*, 1923; Wilamowitz, *S.B. Berl.*, 1925, pp. 333 ff.; C. Bonner, *Harvard Theol. Review*, XXX, 1937, pp. 124 ff. I should draw attention to a newly found statement of Galen in which he characterizes Aristides as a man whose soul was strong by nature, while his body was weak (*Galen in Platonis Timaeum Commentarii Fragmenta*, ed. H. O. Schröder, *C.M.G.*, Suppl. I, 1934, p. 33 [83]). To give all of Aristides' statements concerning Asclepius in the collection of the testimonies would almost have amounted to reprinting all of his works. A selection had to be made; some passages are occasionally referred to in the notes of the interpretation.

⁴ For Aelian as a writer *περί πρῶτων*, cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 120 ff.

⁵ For the various stories told by the Neo-Platonists, cf. Weinreich, *op. cit.*, pp. 35; 74; 90, n. 3; 94.

god's merits and virtues.⁶ The many other individual Epidaurian dedications (*e. g.* T. 432) likewise, if not actually written by the priests, were certainly composed under their supervision. The same holds true of the Athenian inscriptions (T. 428), or those of Rome (T. 438), or of Lebena which outline the happenings at a place which was not one of the great world-centers of the cult but a second-rate, provincial sanctuary (T. 439 ff.).⁷ Certainly, nothing detrimental to the dignity of the god was allowed to be mentioned in these temple reports, and on the whole they tend to glorify the greatness of the divine rather than to testify to it in simple and unadorned language.

The main sources, then, on which the modern student must rely do not constitute the best material that could be hoped for. There is no critical report of a detached observer who made it his business to study Asclepius' cures. Euarestos, the philosopher who came from Egypt in order to learn about the god and his deeds (T. 403), did not leave his notes to posterity. The records preserved are tinged with partisan zeal, and they are statements of Greeks who delighted in the mythical and who even in regard to human affairs showed little concern for the exactness and accuracy of minutiae.⁸ But objectivity without prejudice for or against, in the matter under discussion, is extremely rare in all ages. Moreover, despite the shortcomings inherent in the character of the available evidence, one essential point is indubitable: people went to the Asclepieia, they had dream visions and awoke healed, or at least informed what to do in order to heal themselves. What the physicians Rufus (T. 425) and Galen (T. 459) report, is ample proof of the actuality of the dreams and of the effectiveness of the cures. These men were good scientists, keen observers, and interested in the results achieved rather than in any religious controversies or beliefs.⁹ Their testimony gives assurance that one is not dealing with fiction only, but with facts. Having this in mind and guarding oneself against blind trust in every word to be found in

⁶ For the Epidaurian inscriptions, cf. esp. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, *passim*; cf. also R. Nehrass, *Philologus*, Suppl. XXVII, 4, 1935.

⁷ The Athenian tradition can be supplemented by literary evidence, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 36, n. 6. For Rome, cf. M. Besnier, *L'Île Tibérine*, 1902, pp. 203 ff.; Deubner, *De Incubatione*, pp. 44 ff.; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 ff. For Lebena, cf. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 ff.; M. Guarducci, *I miracoli di Asclepio a Lebena*, *Historia*, VIII, 1934, no. 3, pp. 410 ff.

⁸ I am thinking of Burckhardt's characterization of the Greek temperament (*Griech. Kulturgeschichte*, III, pp. 426 ff.; cf. also *ibid.*, I, pp. 15 ff.).

⁹ The sober judgment of Rufus is generally recognized; cf. J. Ilberg, *Abh. Akad. Leipzig*, 1930, p. 1. Wilamowitz' spiteful verdict on Galen (*Isyllos*, p. 122, n. 12), which has often been repeated, should not blind one to the fact that Galen was one of the greatest scientists of antiquity; for a more adequate evaluation of Galen's work, cf. *e. g.* J. Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, XV, 1905, pp. 276 ff.

the sources, one should be able to draw, in broad outlines at least, a picture of Asclepius' treatment.

In making this attempt the aim must needs be a general representation of temple medicine.¹⁰ For none of the places is the information sufficient to sketch the whole procedure; the various data must be combined, unless the task of reconstruction is to be abandoned entirely. Local and temporal differences can only be hinted at. This involves a certain arbitrariness in representing the facts which can hardly be avoided. On the other hand, although the practice of one temple need not in every detail have been that of all the others, there is no reason to suppose that any basic divergencies existed.¹¹

Now, like any other deity Asclepius had his favorite spots where he was invoked with the greatest probability of success. The god of Epidaurus, of Cos, of Tricca (T. 382), of Pergamum (T. 386), of Lebena (T. 426), of Aegae (T. 387) was especially famous, and the sick flocked to these sanctuaries with a certain preference. Yet there were many more shrines in which Asclepius appeared and took away diseases (*e. g.* T. 391), and it was customary to seek him wherever he was nearest (T. 385).¹²

In all these places incubations were usually made by the patients themselves, but it was also possible, though it happened rarely, that another person acted in behalf of the sick (T. 423, 21; 447).¹³ Whoever came in quest of the god's help had to take some preparatory steps before he

¹⁰ The testimonies refer almost exclusively to temple sleep (incubations). But the god also appeared in the daytime, outside of the temple, on the roadside (T. 423, 25); he came to the home of his friends and took away their illness (T. 446). Besides, people offered prayer to him asking for health and for release from disease; cf. below, pp. 182 ff. If they remained well, or felt relieved of their sufferings, the god had heeded their demands, he had performed a miracle no less impressive than when healing those who slept in his temples. These manifestations of Asclepius' power cannot be rated properly in any modern evaluation of his medicine, for they are rarely mentioned in literary or epigraphical sources; they vanished with the day that saw them. But incubation doubtless was the favorite, the typical method of insuring the assistance of the god, and the investigation therefore can safely be restricted to an analysis of this phenomenon.

¹¹ Herzog has claimed that the practice in the various Asclepius temples differed considerably in method (cf. above, p. 144). One of his arguments derives from the fact that in Cos and Pergamum no tablets similar to those of Epidaurus have been found (*Wunderheilungen*, p. 148). Yet votive tablets were erected in Epidaurus, Cos, and Tricca (T. 382). Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 274, therefore rightly insists that the lack of epigraphical findings does not prove that the cures in these places were basically different from those in others; cf. also Th. Wiegand, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1932, no. 5, p. 31.

¹² For the sanctuaries where incubations are known to have taken place, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1690, 26 ff. The popularity of the temples varied at various times, cf. below, pp. 253 ff. When Herondas speaks of Epidaurus and Cos as the cities which Asclepius inhabits (T. 482, *vv.* 1-2), such an expression should not be taken too literally.

¹³ Cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 85.

could approach him; he had to bathe and to offer sacrifices. That is all that is ever mentioned concerning the ritual preliminary to the incubations.¹⁴ There is no evidence that the supplicants refrained from certain food, or wines, or fasted altogether for several days, as they did in the sanctuaries of other gods. Nor is there any reference to purifying rites or solemn ceremonies, which were so common in most places of oracular revelation.¹⁵ What those who wanted to enter into communication with Asclepius were asked to do was little indeed and devoid of any strangeness. By cleansing themselves and by sacrificing to the deity they paid their proper respect to him before whom they were to appear. But since this god had proclaimed that purity consisted of thinking holy thoughts (T. 318), no elaborate ritual was deemed necessary.¹⁶

At night, then, without paying any fee of admission, the patients went to the place where they were supposed to wait for the god.¹⁷ Their way led them through the temple district. No secret roads were to be followed; no horrifying or mysterious signs were to be seen. It was the sanctuary that they knew and that they had visited in daylight through which they now walked.¹⁸ They were dressed in their usual apparel,

¹⁴ Bathing is known from Athens (T. 421, v. 656 f.). It is justifiable to presuppose that it was demanded everywhere, for purification with water was important in Greek cults (cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 174). Sacrifices are mentioned for Epidaurus (T. 511) and Athens (T. 421, vv. 660 ff.); for details, cf. below, pp. 186 f.

¹⁵ From Philostratus (T. 397) it does not follow that wine was forbidden (contrary to Deubner, *De incubatione*, p. 17). Philostratus blames the Assyrian stripling for his debauchery only on moral grounds, and in the same way T. 415 must also be interpreted. Fasting was demanded for instance by Amphiaraus, cf. P. R. Arbesmann, *R. G. V. V.*, XXI, 1, 1929, pp. 101 f. For the general ritualistic rules prescribed in other temples, cf. e. g. Pausanias, IX, 39, 5 ff. (Trophonius).

¹⁶ Cf. above, p. 126. Even bathing was considered to purify body and soul, cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 405 B, and one may also think of the bath of the *μύσται*; cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, p. 198. J. Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, Sect. Pädagogik, IV, 1901, p. 298, seems inclined to explain Asclepius' concept of inner purity by the fact that he had to deal with sick people who were impure in a physical sense. But in antiquity, disease was never understood as a defilement of the body. Nor would it have discouraged people from coming to the sanctuaries had Asclepius imposed an elaborate ritual, as Ilberg thinks. Other healing deities demanded purifications. How singular the lack of complicated ritualistic rules in the Asclepieia was, becomes evident from the modern surveys on incubation rites in general, cf. Deubner, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. *Incubatio*, IX, p. 1258, 37 ff. The testimonies adduced there are almost exclusively taken from other cults.

¹⁷ W. H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings*, 1902, p. 200, n. 1, speaking of the entrance fees paid at Oropus in the temple of Amphiaraus, says: "this is not certain for the shrines of Asclepius." No such charges are mentioned in connection with the Asclepieia. W. Otto's interpretation of T. 513a (*Priester und Tempel im hellenist. Ägypten*, I, 1905, p. 395), according to which in Memphis entrance fees were paid, is erroneous; cf. R. Herzog, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, 1907, p. 217, n. 4.

¹⁸ Concerning the strange happenings in the temple of Trophonius, cf. again Pausanias, IX, 39, 5 ff.

rather than clothed in hieratic garments; nor did they wear crowns, as supplicants often did.¹⁹ Having entered the temple or the halls especially built for incubation, they lay down on the floor, on a pallet (T. 421, v. 663). There were no animals' skins with which they had to cover themselves.²⁰ Lights were burning where the patients assembled, and were extinguished only shortly before the god himself was supposed to make his appearance (T. 421, vv. 668 f.).²¹

In these sober, almost trivial surroundings the god Asclepius revealed himself directly to everyone who needed his help, and he did so nightly. Whereas the other gods manifested themselves on their own initiative or, if approached by men and asked to appear, determined the time at which they would deign to enter into communication with their worshippers, Asclepius was always willing to come and to lend his assistance.²² To be sure, sometimes he was "out of town" (T. 423, 25), or he refused to be seen on moral grounds (T. 397). Otherwise he showed himself to everybody; he gave his succor in the trials of any individual, whenever he was invoked.

The god was seen by the incubant in his sleep (*e. g.* T. 423, 3) or in a strange state between sleep and waking (T. 445).²³ Everything in his

¹⁹ Cf. Pausanias, *ibid.* It is true, in Pergamum (T. 513) it seems to have occurred that people wore white garments, that rings and belts were forbidden, etc. The inscription is badly mutilated, cf. O. Deubner, *Das Asklepieion von Pergamon*, 1938, p. 11. Even if correctly restored, the many statements of Aristides do not give any indication of such rules; they can hardly have been commonly applied. Aristophanes, moreover (T. 421), though mentioning the bath, does not refer to a change of the garment, a wonderful topic indeed for the comic poet, had he been able to make use of it without doing too much injustice to the actual facts.

²⁰ In Epidaurus there was an ἄβατον (T. 423, 7) opposite the temple (T. 739, 2), where the patients slept; the same is probably true of Cos, cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 152, n. 22. In Athens, they slept opposite the statue of the god (T. 427). As regards sleeping on animals' skins, cf. T. 206 (with reference to Podalirius); Amphiaraus, too, expected his visitors to sleep on the skin of the sacrificial animal, cf. Pausanias, I, 34, 5.

²¹ Note that here the priests did not play an important rôle in the preparation of the epiphany, as they did for instance in the temple of Trophonius, cf. Pausanias, *loc. cit.*

²² For epiphanies of gods in general, cf. below, n. 37. The great gods appeared to their favorites in order to assist them in their difficulties, or to their people during times of political danger in order to save them. In the case of Trophonius, it was hard to ascertain when he could be seen, cf. again Pausanias, *loc. cit.* Whether Amphiaraus gave oracles regularly or only at certain times, does not become clear from Pausanias' description, nor is it sure at all that Amphiaraus actually appeared to the incubants.

²³ It is important to emphasize that the epiphanies of Asclepius were dream visions. Even the protégés of the god, like Proclus, did not see him when they were awake, cf. T. 445 f.; cf. also T. 444; 447; 448. As far as I am aware, Asclepius only once appeared to one of his patients while she was awake (T. 423, 25), but this happened outside the temple, by the roadside. I need hardly add that Aristophanes' statement, according to which the witness of an incubation scene is not asleep (T. 421, vv. 714 ff.), is poetical license. In situations other than temple healings, Asclepius could of course be seen in a waking vision, cf. *e. g.* T. 260.

appearance announced his divinity.²⁴ He came in the form in which he was portrayed in his sacred statues (T. 850, *v.* 654), that is, as a bearded man, the expression of his face gentle and calm (T. 448), holding in his hand a rustic staff (T. 850, *v.* 655), or as a youth of beautiful and fine appearance (T. 423, 17; cf. 25). He spoke with a harmonious voice (T. 427; 850, *v.* 657). Sometimes he laughed (T. 423, 35); he had a sense of humor (T. 423, 8). There was nothing terrifying in his appearance.²⁵

Having approached the patient (*e. g.* T. 423, 4) and entered into personal contact with him (T. 425), the god then immediately proceeded to heal the disease brought to his attention, or he advised a treatment to be followed; the former procedure is the older one attested. It is celebrated in the play of Aristophanes, where Asclepius restores the eyesight of Plutus in a flash (T. 421, *vv.* 737 f.). The Epidaurian inscriptions glory in the god whose patients, whatever the disease that plagued them, woke up the next morning well and healthy (T. 423).²⁶ The Coan Asclepius wiped off illness with his divine hand (T. 482, 17 ff.). The Asclepius of Pergamum took away illness overnight (T. 425). The god

²⁴ The description of dream visions given here is restricted to those of the god alone. Aristophanes makes Asclepius appear together with Iaso and Panacea (T. 421, *vv.* 701 ff.); the monuments picture him together with his family, cf. B. Stark, *Die Epiphanien des Asklepios u. ihre Darstellung durch die Kunst*, *Arch. Zeitschr.*, 1851, pp. 341 ff. The Epidaurian inscriptions sometimes name the sons of Asclepius as his companions in the treatment (T. 423, 23), probably referring to Machaon and Podalirius (cf. also *e. g.* T. 431), or they speak of slaves who follow the god (T. 423, 27; cf. also T. 421, *v.* 710).

²⁵ Trophonius' terrifying sight was proverbial (Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 508 f.); it was hard to look upon the gods in their manifest presence (cf. *Iliad*, XX, 131). Only once, in a literary passage, is Asclepius' appearance described as rather frightening or awe-inspiring, and the difference of his features from those of the cult statue expressly mentioned (T. 448). (For the artistic representation of Asclepius, cf. below, pp. 218 ff.). Not even a mystic light radiated from the god; at least not when he appeared to his patients. Deubner (*De incubatione*, p. 11) quotes T. 295 as evidence for a light coming forth from the god; but this is the light shining forth from his armor when he manifests himself as Savior of Sparta. Aristides, who in mystic revelations sees Asclepius as a man of wondrous beauty and size (T. 325), once beholds him with three heads, surrounded by light (p. 438, 25 K), in a vision in which the god assures him of his patronage, and the god of magic appears in a firebrand (T. 328). Similar as the appearance of Asclepius may have been to that of other gods (cf. Deubner, *ibid.*, pp. 9 f.), still it was different in that it lacked all "superhuman" traits.

²⁶ Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 67, says that the Epidaurian inscriptions give the impression that the healings were performed hurriedly, but that in a few instances it is still possible to look behind the scene and to detect that actually time was required. Yet, the healings quoted by Herzog (pp. 67; 79) are not "nachträgliche Heilungen," but miracles outside the temple, or the recovery is supposed to occur later, yet spontaneously. In the case of Aeschines (T. 404), who stays over a longer period (Herzog, *ibid.*, pp. 39 ff.) it is not known whether this testimony refers to Epidaurus at all; nor is it certain that this Aeschines is the rhetor of the fourth century B. C., cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 6, n. 4.

healed at Lebena in a trice (*e. g.* T. 426). At all times and in all places Asclepius proved to be a speedy healer.²⁷

Yet he may also have acted as a consulting physician from the beginning of his career, although the oldest testimonies do not speak of him in this rôle.²⁸ At any rate, from Hellenistic times on the god proposed means of healing to his patients, and he seems to have given a certain preference to this method, although he did not cease to perform miracle cures and to intervene with his divine hand even at a time when in most cases he restricted himself to prescribing remedies (T. 432). Apparently he took increasing delight in working out a complicated schedule for his supplicants and in suggesting baths and diet to them (T. 407).²⁹ His advice in most instances was clear and direct. It rarely needed clarification through a professional interpreter (T. 430, *vv.* 246 ff.), or through a priest (T. 497), or through the patient himself and his friends (T. 417).³⁰

What did the god actually do when immediately healing his patients, or what did he ordain when proposing a treatment? As healer of diseases he proved to be an excellent and daring surgeon. He did not abhor cutting the whole body open; he made incisions into the innermost parts of the human frame (T. 423, 13; 23; 25). Nevertheless his patients, when awakening the following morning, could walk about and did not feel any bad aftereffects. Few details are given by the testimonies in regard to the god's technique: he used a knife (T. 423, 13), and other instruments (T. 426). But on the whole Asclepius' procedure remains vague (T. 423, 4; 12; 27; 32).³¹

²⁷ Herrlich (*op. cit.*, pp. 30 f.) was the first of the more recent students to insist again on this point. Herzog (*op. cit.*, p. 148) wants to exclude the miracle, at least as far as Cos is concerned. But Herrlich (*op. cit.*, p. 31, n. 1) was right in stressing the importance of the Herondas passage (T. 482). Cf. also above, n. 11.

²⁸ Thraemer (Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1688, 17 ff.) holds the view that the *Curculio* of Plautus (T. 429-30) proves that even in the Epidaurus of the fourth century B. C. dream oracles were given, and that this was the usual practice. But the *Curculio* relates only that Asclepius did not take care of his patient, although he appeared to him, and that the patient asked the interpreter what the apparition may have meant. Nothing certain can be concluded from this testimony as to the healings themselves. On the other hand, the tablets naturally celebrated the greatest achievements of the god, his miraculous cures; that does not necessarily mean that he did not also prescribe remedies, a slighter miracle indeed. Moreover, even the Epidaurian inscriptions mention oracles given by Asclepius, cf. above, p. 105.

²⁹ Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 111 ff., has emphasized this change in the god's practice.

³⁰ Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 130 ff., has collected those passages in Aristides which refer to the various persons with whom the rhetor takes counsel in interpreting his dreams. In very dubious cases he even asks the god himself for clarification.

³¹ It must be stressed that the god continued his surgical practice throughout the centuries. The generation before Aristides witnessed especially astonishing examples

Besides, the god relied on his pharmacological knowledge. Salves and drugs are mentioned (T. 423, 9; 17; 41), which were taken from Asclepius' medicine chest (T. 421, v. 710), but they are not specified. Moreover, he had certain animals to help him: just as it actually happened that his sacred dogs or serpents cured the patients by licking them (T. 423, 17; 26), so serpents appeared to the sick in their dreams (T. 423, 39; 421, vv. 732 ff.). In one case, the god, jokingly perhaps, used a brush to take away the disease (T. 423, 28), but he could also banish an illness into a cloth (T. 423, 6; cf. 421, vv. 730 ff.). Finally, he applied his hand, touching his patient's body with it (T. 423, 31), or stretching it forth to him (T. 456),³² and in Epidaurus (T. 423, 41) and Athens (T. 446) the divine kiss was one of the means by which the sickness was removed instantaneously.

If the god advised a treatment, he recommended natural remedies—what else would his clients have been able to use? He gave drugs (T. 432), either the usual ones or those of his own invention (T. 410); he ordered the eating of partridge with frankincense (T. 434); he counselled his patients to apply ashes from his altar (T. 438), to take rides or any other kind of exercise (T. 407 f.; 435); to go swimming in rivers or in the sea, to bathe in the bathhouse or in springs (T. 408a; 432); he also favored mental gymnastics ranging from the composition of odes to that of comical mimes (T. 413). In fact he was very definite in his prescriptions (T. 439) and varied them considerably, according to the type of patients with whom he was concerned (T. 427). Natural as these remedies were, they had of course unusual effects. Water from the well in Pergamum, whether one drank of it or bathed in it, could make the blind see again, the lame walk about (T. 409). It was apparently also of some consequence whether a drug was taken in the home of the patient, or at a certain sacred spot in the temple (T. 411). In the latter case the efficacy of the remedy was enhanced. Nor did the god neglect to take a personal part in what was going on: his divine hand touched the body of the patient and thus imparted his blessings (T. 432). In addition, the medical treatment which he gave was in many instances contrary to

of his skill (T. 412). Weinreich (*Heilungswunder*, p. 30) interprets *χειρουργία* in T. 412 as "Handauflegen." There is no reason to take the word in such an unusual sense. Operations are attested also in an inscription of Lebena dating from the second century A. D. (T. 426). Incidentally, the operation of which Aristides dreams (T. 325) is performed by Sarapis, not by Asclepius, contrary to Weinreich, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³² Cf. also T. 317, 10. For archaeological material, cf. K. Sudhoff, *Handanlegung des Heilgottes* etc., *Arch. f. Gesch. d. Medizin*, XVIII, 1926, pp. 235 ff., and Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 55, n. 17. For the symbolism of the gesture, cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 1 ff.

all human experience and theory. He directed the sick to exercise, when in their opinion rest was necessary (T. 408). What the god demanded, astonished patient and doctor (T. 417); it seemed strange to the human physician (T. 405). In short, Asclepius' precepts very often were unique or paradoxical (T. 317, 8; 408).⁸³

This much can still be ferreted out about the apparition of the god and about his doings. No doubt, the outward aspect of incubations, as they were practiced in the Asclepieia, was simple and sober. The god's cures were medical cures. Asclepius was not a wizard whose hocus pocus perplexes men, nor was he one of those gods who nod fulfillment of the wishes of their suppliants.⁸⁴ He acted as a physician; his healings were miracles—for his success was beyond all human reach—but they were strictly medical miracles. On the other hand, this rationality of Asclepius' treatment seems strangely interwoven with the fantastic and the unreal. There were dreams, there were oracles, there was a divinity who was believed to appear and "I seemed almost to touch him and to perceive that he himself was coming, and to be halfway between sleep and waking and to want to get the power of vision and to be anxious lest he depart beforehand, and to have turned my ears to listen, sometimes as in a dream, sometimes as in a waking vision, and my hair was standing on end and tears of joy (came forth), and the weight of knowledge was no burden—what man could even set these things forth in words? But if he is one of the initiates, then he knows and understands" (T. 417).

Yet one must not overemphasize the irrational element in these cures, at least not as far as their historical understanding is concerned. The belief in the existence of gods was never seriously challenged in Graeco-Roman centuries. Even the Epicureans admitted that there were gods; the Sceptics were satisfied with expressing their uncertainty in this matter, just as in all others; atheism in its true sense, meaning the absolute denial of gods, was an isolated creed of no consequence. The point under debate was rather, whether the gods actually interfered in human affairs. The many, of course, never had any qualms about this problem. But in the centuries in which the Asclepius cult gained ascendancy, even the predominant philosophy, that of the Stoics, asserted that God's providence did become apparent in His direct help to men more than in any other of His acts; the Epicureans meekly objected that God, although

⁸³ Cf. also Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 198 f.; Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 137 f.

⁸⁴ The latter statement, of course, is true only of the god of incubations. When Asclepius was approached in prayers and granted his help, he acted like all the other deities, cf. below, pp. 182; 184.

He existed, lived in blessed indifference far from this world.³⁵ On the whole, it was taken for granted that the deities showed concern for man and would come to his assistance.

As regards the particular form in which Asclepius administered his help, his epiphany, his active healing or his prophetic advice—it was generally admitted that epiphanies of gods actually happened. Plato, to be sure, had rejected this belief; he thought it beneath the dignity of a god to appear in human shape.³⁶ But his contention did not impress the people, not even the philosophers. Epiphanies continued to be experienced, though less frequently than in ancient times, and they never ceased entirely.³⁷ Moreover it should be borne in mind that every religious festival, every religious ceremony presupposed the presence of the god. Plutarch, the Academic philosopher and priest of Delphi, neatly summarizes the general belief by saying: "For it is not the abundance of wine or the roasting of meat that makes the joy of festivals, but the good hope and the belief that the god is present in his kindness and graciously accepts what is offered."³⁸ In short, Asclepius' epiphanies occurred in a world in which such events were usual and were accepted as a matter of course, as a necessary consequence of the existence of the gods. The only feature that distinguished his appearances from those of other deities was the regularity of his nightly revelations. Yet Asclepius was a demigod; it was in accord with his nature to live on earth, to be in constant touch with men.³⁹

³⁵ Cf. e. g. the discussion between the Stoic, the Sceptic, and the Epicurean in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*. That the belief in god's participation in this world increased with the rise of Neo-Platonic philosophy, is self-evident.

³⁶ Cf. *Republic*, III, 381, especially D; in general, cf. F. Pfister, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Epiphanie, Suppl. IV, pp. 277 ff.

³⁷ Such epiphanies are to be found as early as in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. After they had occurred less often for some centuries, they became again more frequent in the third century B. C. The attitude of the Lycaonians toward St. Paul and Barnabas, *Acts*, 14, 11-12, exemplifies the ever-ready willingness of the heathens to believe in the epiphanies even of the Olympians. Cf. in general Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 23; Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 256 ff.; K. Steinhauser, *Der Prodigien Glaube u. das Prodigienwesen der Griechen*, Diss. Tüb., 1911, pp. 36 ff. The classic literary passage concerning epiphanies is the statement of Dionysius Halicarnasensis, *Antiquitates Romanae*, II, 68.

³⁸ *Non posse suaviter vivi*, 1102A; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, pp. 301 f., who rightly emphasizes that "(die Urzeit) den Gott leibhaftig erscheinend und am Opfermahl teilnehmend dachte"; cf. also the *Apollo Hymn* of Callimachus and Weinreich's interpretation, *Tüb. Beitr.*, V, 1929, pp. 229 ff.; even if Weinreich is right in saying that the god in this case is not "visibly" present (*loc. cit.*, p. 409), the god is present just the same; the miracle presages his coming.

³⁹ Cf. above, p. 84. The great gods were seen by the few who were their favorites; or during times of political danger they appeared to their people in order to save them. Their epiphanies remained isolated happenings, otherwise they would not have been so carefully recorded in later times (for ancient books on epiphanies, cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 49 ff.). Asclepius' epiphanies in consequence of his appointed task were

Asclepius not only appeared to the sick, he took away illness, he did what was beyond human power. It seems fitting for a god to be able to accomplish more than human beings, to achieve things which are beyond the reach of man. This fact in itself, to the ancients, was not a miracle in the modern sense; it was a wonder, a marvel; men were aghast at the power of the deity, they were deeply impressed by it. As far as the god was concerned, he only proved his divine virtue, for him it was not extraordinary to act as he did; his superhuman deeds were the genuine outgrowth of his divine nature.⁴⁰ Not even ancient scientists and philosophers had any clear-cut proof to offer that such divine actions were impossible; though generally insisting on a causal explanation of the phenomena, they could not exclude divine interference, as long as the possibility of divine action was recognized at all.⁴¹ Moreover the ancient concept of natural laws was not as rigid as is the modern; it applied only to such phenomena as were within the range of the ordinary; extraordinary events and circumstances, however, were on a different level. There were certain facts which had to be recognized as long as they were accredited by good testimonies, even though a rational explanation could not be found for them, and miracles, or divine actions, formed part of these inexplicable though well-attested occurrences.⁴² In other words: the ancients, even scientists and philosophers, did not debate so much

so numerous that they were never collected. The Epidaurian tablets (T. 423) are the only known "official" record, otherwise there are only the individual attestations of the various inscriptions set up in the temples.

⁴⁰ Again Plutarch expresses the general feeling when, after rejecting such petty miracles as the sweating or bleeding or speaking of statues, phenomena which he tries to explain on a natural basis, he adds, *Coriolanus*, 38: "But where history forces our assent with numerous and credible witnesses, we must conclude that an experience different from that of sensation arises in the imaginative part of the soul, and persuades men to think it sensation; as, for instance, in sleep, when we think we see and hear, although we neither see nor hear. However, those who cherish strong feelings of goodwill and affection for the Deity, and are therefore unable to reject or deny anything of this kind, have a strong argument for their faith in the wonderful and transcendent character of the divine power. For the Deity has no resemblance whatever to man, either in nature, activity, skill, or strength; nor, if He does something that we cannot do, or contrives something that we cannot contrive, is this contrary to reason; but rather, since He differs from us in all points, in His works most of all is He unlike us and far removed from us. But most of the Deity's powers, as Heracleitus says, 'escape our knowledge through incredulity'" (*Plutarch's Lives*, transl. by B. Perrin, IV, pp. 213 f. [Loeb]).

⁴¹ The Epicureans tried to give the impression that they invented the principle *ex nihilo nihil fieri*, but in reality everybody took it for granted that each phenomenon had its cause. The non-Epicureans found one of the causes in God whom the Epicureans had banned from the world by making Him live in the *intermundia*, and thus arrived at a "natural explanation" of the phenomena.

⁴² Cf. in general R. Hirzel, *Themis, Dike*, etc., 1907, pp. 387 ff., and Edelstein, *Bulletin*, V, pp. 240 ff.

the possibility of miracles, as their actuality. Asclepius, since he really healed his patients by performing operations or by applying drugs, as these patients confirmed, was certain to be recognized as a performer of divine deeds.⁴³ It is true, some wondered why the god should be a better physician than any human doctor, and ascribed greater accomplishments to Hippocrates than to Asclepius (T. 416a). A few sceptics even went so far as to claim that Asclepius could not possibly prescribe a treatment since, to their knowledge, Poseidon did not advise about shipping (T. 416). But in view of the cures related such an argument by analogy was not convincing. Generally speaking all agreed that the sick were healed by the god in his temples.

Equally positive was the judgment of the ancients concerning the reality of dreams which were supposed to give men a share in divine wisdom. Nobility and plebs, townsfolk and farmers believed in such revelations. Philosophers and scientists admitted that dreams were sent by the gods. Only the Epicureans and the adherents of the New Academy objected to such a belief, but even they did not necessarily reject the prophetic and revealing character of dreams.⁴⁴ Asclepius, then, as a giver of dream oracles only made use of that means by which God and men were supposed to communicate. In dreams the soul came into contact with those divine powers surrounding men and the world which it could not apprehend while it was awake.⁴⁵

The fact, then, that Asclepius appeared to his worshippers, that he himself cured them, or that he told them how to take care of their illnesses, was nothing peculiar in the ancient world. In doing all this the god did not act contrary to any of the established scientific or philosophical

⁴³ The problem of miracles, as they were understood in antiquity, has never been studied in detail. Most books dealing with the questions involved are satisfied with stating that the ancients believed in miracles and that ancient and modern concepts differ in this respect. Cf. e.g. R. Lambert, *Das Wunder bei den Römischen Historikern*, 1905, pp. 5 f.; Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. VII f. Not even Weinreich's new investigations bring a general clarification of the matter (*Tüb. Beitr.*, V, pp. 204 ff.).

⁴⁴ Cf. in general A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, I, 1879, pp. 277 ff.; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 61 f. A. Palm, *Studien z. hippokr. Schrift περὶ διατρῆς*, Diss. Tübingen, 1933, pp. 47 ff. Aristotle, who denies the divine character of dreams (462 b20), admits their prophetic nature and recognizes that especially physicians considered the dreams of their patients a great help (463a 5). Cf. also the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen*, Book IV. It is conceivable that even the Epicureans and Academics acknowledged the possibility that dreams could reveal something about diseases and their treatment, although they denied that dreams were sent by God. If this assumption is correct, they were unable to refute the contention that the dream healings in the Asclepieia were successful.

⁴⁵ Cf. especially Posidonius' concept of communication with the gods through dreams (Cicero, *De Divinatione*, I, 30, 64), rightly referred to in this context by Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 76, n. 1.

theories, nor did he assume any extraordinary position. He simply acted like a god. From every point of view, Asclepius' cures, performed continually in the Asclepieia, were well within the limits of that world which the ancients recognized as real.

3. HISTORICAL EVALUATION OF TEMPLE MEDICINE

While it is quite understandable that to the ancients Asclepius' cures were acceptable, that their belief in his divine deeds was never shaken, it is a different problem how the modern interpreter should explain them, how he should account for their success—if they were successful. Since for him it cannot have been the god who treated or advised treatment, he will be first of all inclined to assume that it was men who did the job. Moreover, on the basis of the medical character of Asclepius' miracles, it seems reasonable to suppose that the therapy applied in the Asclepieia actually was a medical therapy, that it was administered by physicians and priests, that the Asclepieia were sanatoria, that the dreams were only a means of enhancing the confidence of the patient, thus corroborating his will-power, a factor of great consequence for the restoration of his health.¹

But such a thesis is untenable in view of the facts. There is no evidence whatever that physicians participated in the temple healings. Besides, the treatment given by the god, the true physician (T. 418), in many cases was contrary to all ancient medical theory. One would have to postulate a *medicina altera* different from that known from Hippocrates and Galen, an invention of the priests and the physicians who presumably worked together in the Asclepieia.² Last but not least, that the temples of Asclepius were health-resorts, distinguished through their especially favorable location, is a concept not to be substantiated. It has long been pointed out that the temple near Epidaurus had no better climate than the city proper, that the Tiber Island was certainly not an ideal place for the sick to live, and that the Laconian temple of Asclepius, which was situated in the swamps, could hardly be called a watering

¹ Cf. above, pp. 143 f.

² Cf. above, pp. 153 f. It should also be pointed out that most people came to the god when human help failed. Apart from the many statements to this effect, the cases brought to Asclepius' attention varied with the times. After physicians had learned to treat chronic diseases, such ailments are less frequently mentioned in the inscriptions, cf. Edelstein, *Bull. of the Inst. of the Hist. of Med.*, V, 1937, pp. 244 f.; cf. also below, p. 169. It is difficult to understand how Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, p. 147) could infer from the testimonies of Aristides, Galen and Rufus a participation in the cures at Pergamum on the part of "scientific medicine." These witnesses speak solely of cures that were performed by the god.

place.³ Occasionally the good effect of the place where the Asclepieion was situated may have contributed to the success of cures that extended over a long period, but more can hardly be admitted. For even the most magnificent wells, whatever their mineral qualities, cannot have done what the ancients believed them to do: make the blind see and the lame walk (T. 409). Certainly the god made use of natural remedies—but in what way and for what purpose!⁴ It will not do, then, to refer to medicine and good air alone in explanation of Asclepius' healings.

Now is it conceivable that the cures were brought about by somnambulism?⁵ This might account at least for the dreams that people had in the Asclepieia. Yet it is highly questionable whether somnambulism could ever have been a mass-phenomenon. Moreover, people who go through this experience usually do not recall the content of their dreams, whereas the worshippers of Asclepius did.⁶ Nor is there any indication that in preparation of the temple sleep artificial means were used to influence the supplicants. What they had to do before communing with the god, was restricted to the simplest and most common acts, demanded of everybody who approached a deity.⁷ Finally, to attribute to the priests of Asclepius reliance on such devices as somnambulism means to place

³ Herrlich, *op. cit.*, pp. 29 f., insisted on the fact that many of the Asclepieia, even Epidaurus, were not built in healthful places. He omits a reference to the Laconian temple (T. 764a), about which Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 75, says: "Bei Asklepios überrascht (!), dass er als Heilgott ἐν ἑλῆι bei Sparta verehrt wurde." The modern discussion on the whole is determined not by the actual findings of the excavations, but rather by Vitruvius' theoretical demands for the establishment of temples in general, and of Asclepieia in particular (T. 707). Vitruvius urges that all sanctuaries be erected (*constituuntur*) in healthful spots, because such a situation is an adornment to the temple, and as regards the sanctuaries of Asclepius and Salus, permits in times of epidemic fevers that people may live for some time in a salubrious climate. Vitruvius' plea is probably the result of the conditions which were prevalent in Italy due to malaria.

⁴ Cf. above, p. 153. I need not discuss here the various scientific analyses of the waters in the Asclepieia (some of the results are summarized by Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 155, n. 31). These investigations have no bearing on the problem at hand. Herrlich, *op. cit.*, p. 30, who also rejects the attempt to explain the cures through the mineral waters that were used, has pointed out that ancient physicians did not think highly of mineral waters. If the priests had applied water for its mineral qualities, they would have done so contrary to the opinion of ancient scientists.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 142.

⁶ This important point has been stressed already by Herrlich, *op. cit.*, p. 9. That the patients remembered their dreams is the presupposition for their subsequent recovery, at least where the god gave only his advice. Needless to say, I am not concerned here with the problem of somnambulism itself. Nor do I wish to argue that somnambulism was known to the ancients, cf. above, p. 142. My only purpose is to raise the question, whether Asclepius' cures could possibly have been connected with this phenomenon.

⁷ Cf. above, pp. 148 ff. Welcker (*Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 110 ff.) in the same way has refuted the adherents of somnambulism, and he adds: "Mit Bestimmtheit darf behauptet werden dass . . . die alten Autoren nichts enthalten was uns berechnete den Somnambulismus der neueren Zeit daran anzuknüpfen. . . ."

them on the same level with magicians. In antiquity, however, religion and magic were entirely separated. No priest of a true deity would have promoted magic, which was an unholy art, not worthy of those who believe in gods.⁸

But perhaps it is pointless to search for an elaborate explanation: the priests impersonated the god, they employed some means or other, the success of their contrivances was merely accidental, based on deceit and trickery.⁹ To be sure there were deceitful priests, nor were the ancients unaware of them. They often condemned miracles as fakes, and much as they believed in manifestations of the divine, it was a commonplace that epiphanies of gods were often staged by men so as to mislead the credulous.¹⁰ Once, even a propagator of the Asclepius cult was unmasked as charlatan, and the worship which he had founded in a provincial town in the second century A. D., and which had soon become renowned, was indicted as deception of the people. It was Lucian who thus exposed Alexander, the false prophet, as he calls him.¹¹ Otherwise the Asclepieia remained free from all charges of fraud. The priests of Epidaurus, of Cos, of Pergamum were never accused of being impostors, of having themselves fabricated the miracles ascribed to their god; not even those who were sceptical of the healings went so far.¹² Occasional deceit granted,

⁸ K. H. E. de Jong, *Das antike Mysterienwesen*, 1919, p. 428, in a different context, has emphasized this essential distinction between magic and religion, characteristic of classical antiquity. The situation in Greece was different from that in Egypt or in India, where the priests were also magicians. What was true of Greek and Roman priests was also true of laymen. Physicians, for instance, abided by religion, but rejected magic. Cf. above, p. 139.

⁹ Cf. above, p. 143.

¹⁰ Even the pious Xenophon (*Hellenica*, VI, 4, 7) does not refrain from noting that a certain miracle was by some people held a fraud. Nor does Herodotus lack judgment when he speaks about the apparition of Athena in the time of Pisistratus (I, 60). For later times cf. e. g. Livy, XXXIX, 13, 13; Pausanias, III, 19, 10; Servius, in *Aeneidem*, XI, 787. For apparitions of gods used as ruses, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Epiphanie, Suppl. IV, p. 294, 55; concerning mechanical devices for the performance of miracles, cf. Weinreich, *Tüb. Beitr.*, pp. 407 ff.; in general de Jong, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 ff. The fraudulent impersonation of gods through men must be distinguished of course from those instances in which it was customary for a human being to represent the deity, as in processions, cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 165 ff.

¹¹ For Lucian's *Alexander* or *Pseudomantis*, cf. especially O. Weinreich, *N. Jahrb.*, XLVII, 1921, pp. 129 ff.; A. D. Nock, *Conversion*, 1933, pp. 93 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 263 f. It hardly needs justification that Lucian's dialogue was not included in the collection of testimonies; only two passages (T. 210; 29 b) which seem to have some bearing on the cult in general have been printed; cf. below, p. 213, n. 20.

¹² Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, p. 78) calls the report of Hippys (T. 422) "eine sehr bössartige Geschichte über das epidaurische Hieron." Here the priests in the absence of the god try to perform an operation but fail utterly, and the god chides them for their undertaking. I do not think that the story is told with any malicious intent, otherwise Aelian would not have repeated it; and Hippys, too, apparently was a believer in divine miracle stories which later authors copied from his book, cf. F. Jacoby, *Pauly-*

the ancients were hardly so easy to fool that a mummary performed daily in hundreds of places throughout the centuries should never have been detected or suspected, or at least hinted at. The fact remains that in antiquity the majority of the people, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, scientists and poets alike, had no doubt that Asclepius actually appeared to his worshippers and personally treated their ailments. The Christians too admitted that in the temples of Asclepius miracles were brought about. They differed from the heathens only in so far as they considered them the work of Satan rather than of the true God.

The theories which assume an interference on the part of men, be they physicians or priests, cannot be substantiated. Does this not enhance the probability that the cures of Asclepius resulted from the soul's mastery over the body, that it was the belief in God which healed the sick? It is difficult to argue for or against the influence of the soul on the body. Those who believe in it, admit themselves that they have not yet succeeded in clearly tracing the power whose manifestation seems apparent.¹³ It is likely that some of Asclepius' patients were healed through auto-suggestion. All cases can hardly be explained in this way. And what about the dreams which people acknowledged that they had? What about the medical treatment, which in the opinion of the ancients was responsible for the success attained? The modern thesis is too vague and explains too little to be satisfactory. On the other hand, although Asclepius' cures in their outcome were similar to those of Christ, they cannot be unrestrictedly paralleled with them: Christ's followers regained health through their trust in the Savior. Asclepius' help did not involve faith. Even those who did not believe were healed by the god (T. 423, 3; 4); being a heathen deity and a Greek he even delighted in treating people who doubted his power, although at times he was also inclined to punish those who did not acknowledge his might (T. 423, 7).¹⁴ It seems almost

Wissowa, *s.v. Hippys*, VIII, p. 1930, 7 ff. The whole event serves to emphasize the might of the god which cannot be matched by human endeavor. At any rate, not even here are the priests accused of fraud, and their action is accounted for by the god's absence. Incidentally I cannot believe that Hippys gives the original tradition. This is represented rather by the report of the Epidaurian tablets (T. 423, 23) which in turn is rationalized by Hippys who substitutes the priests for the children of the god, cf. also Jacoby, *ibid.*, p. 1928, 37 ff.

¹³ Cf. above, p. 144.

¹⁴ The difference between the miracles of Asclepius and those of Christ in this respect has rightly been pointed out by Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, p. 125), who refutes Latte's attempt to explain Asclepius' deeds in terms of Christian faith (*Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 120). But Herzog himself sometimes overemphasizes the motif of faith (*ibid.*, pp. 60; 64 f.; 71). It is only Aelian who knows that Asclepius refused to heal a pupil of Epicurus (T. 399), and even here the god seems more concerned with his patient's

characteristic of the god's patients that the firmness of their belief did not match the greatness of the god's deeds; even Aristides, a devotee if ever there was one, time and again showed distrust in what he was told by his patron saint (T. 417; cf. 447). Most of Asclepius' patients, to be sure, were hopeful that the god could and would help (T. 444); the god asked them to have confidence (T. 440), he despised cowards (T. 423, 35; 37). In the same way, the human doctor expected his patient to be hopeful, to believe that he could be cured, to help him fight the disease; otherwise nothing could be achieved.¹⁵ The patient's confidence, then, was a factor which came into play in human medicine no less than in divine, the only distinctive feature of Asclepius' healings being that they eclipsed all human hopes and expectations. Sometimes the patient's belief may have contributed to his recovery, but this disposition of the mind was not a conscious factor in the process of healing, nor can it have been a common one that would make the phenomenon of temple medicine as a whole understandable.¹⁶

All the explanations proposed in modern debate therefore in some way seem to fall short of their goal. Another interpretation of the facts related by the ancient testimonies is necessary. I suggest that an attempt be made to explain the cures of Asclepius historically. Even miracles, one should think, can be accounted for only against the background of the society in which they happen and with particular regard to the subject matter which they concern. Asclepius' healings, then, being the deeds of a Greek god, must be interpreted in their relation to Greek life and Greek medicine.¹⁷ Thereby, one has to presuppose that cures were actually achieved in the

general lack of religiosity than with his disregard for his own power. Concerning the so-called "Strafwunder," cf. also Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 189 ff.; Herzog, *op. cit.*, pp. 123 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Hippocrates, *Epidemiae*, I, xi: "The art has three factors, the disease, the patient, the physician. The physician is the servant of the art. The patient must co-operate with the physician in combating the disease" (transl. by Jones, *Hippocrates*, I, p. 165 [Loeb]).

¹⁶ To express the same argument in more general terms: the ancient religious experience differed from that of later periods, and especially from that of the Christians. On the other hand, it would be rash to exclude the factor of belief entirely. Aristides, for whom the god was his special benefactor, his patron, has a relationship to the deity which one might well liken to Pietism (cf. Welcker, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 124). But even with him it is not yet the attitude to be found in modern faith-healing, cf. above, p. 145. The treatment given remains of paramount importance, and all other factors can have only secondary influence.

¹⁷ It seems to me that the general tendency to interpret the miracles in the light of historical parallels is rather dangerous. Certainly, what happened in Greece is not an isolated phenomenon and can be clarified to a certain extent by references to the events taking place in Catholic churches or even among uncivilized tribes; yet for the interpreter it is first of all the singular and individual, the Greek solution of the problem, with which he should be concerned.

way in which they are described, that many of the healings were successful. This assumption can safely be made, for had all cures been failures, the Asclepieia would certainly not have existed for so many centuries. To be sure, one might well say of the dedications to Asclepius expressing the patients' thanks for divine help in disease, what Diogenes said of the votives at Samothrace commemorating the gratitude of the worshippers for their salvation from shipwreck: "There would have been far more, if those who were not saved had set up offerings."¹⁸ Nevertheless, a sufficient number of successful cures are known which would justify, even require, an explanation.

Now two problems really need clarification: how could people have such dreams as they claimed they had? How could they feel cured afterwards or get better by applying the devices proposed in their dreams or concluded from them by the interpretation of their content? For under the presupposition that the god did not act and that the priests did not interfere, there remain only the dreams themselves, and the healings accomplished instantaneously, or brought about in course of time through some medical treatment resulting from dreamed prescriptions.¹⁹

That people who came to the Asclepieia dreamed in the sanctuaries seems understandable. They came with this aim in mind, and if some did not succeed in having visions, as the testimonies candidly admit (T. 423, 25; 395; 397), they must have been the minority. It is equally well comprehensible that the sick dreamed of Asclepius and of their diseases, that they saw the god, as he was represented in his statues, assisting them or giving them counsel. Coming in quest of the god's help, excited by the long journey which sometimes they had undertaken for this selfsame purpose, preoccupied with their suffering as they must have been, having seen the sights of the sanctuary and having stayed in these surroundings at least for a number of hours, having read the tablets on which the reports on portentous dreams and successful cures were inscribed—how could the supplicants fail to dream as they did? It is hardly exaggerated to say that anybody who in a world in which the gods were still alive should visit a temple and wait for a divine vision would have such dreams. In the given circumstances these visions were quite natural.²⁰

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius, VI, 59 (transl. by R. D. Hicks, II, 1925, p. 61 [Loeb]).

¹⁹ Cf. above, pp. 150 ff.

²⁰ Cf. Herzog's short statement to the same effect, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 67: "... die Erzählungen der Geheilten und die Lektüre der Stelen mussten demnach die Träume ... in eine bestimmte Richtung lenken." Such an assumption, I think, does not need any confirmation beyond that which everybody's personal experience provides; it is not necessary to go into the details of modern doctrines concerning dreams, a task which I am not prepared to undertake. But it should be pointed out that an explanation of dreams

As regards the specific content of the dreams, it is first of all necessary to remember that such refined visions as the one reported by Hippys (T. 422), or that seen by Apellas (T. 432) were so to say individual achievements of good dreamers. Even the Epidaurian inscriptions give instances of very simple dreams (*e. g.* T. 423, 17). The examples which Artemidorus cites (T. 449 ff.) are mostly devoid of any complicated succession of actions. If a dream in which Asclepius and Athena appeared together meant that an enema of Attic honey was to be administered to the patient (T. 449a), it was really not difficult to receive healing oracles, and the typical dream of the worshipper certainly was of this plain and unsophisticated character.²¹

But many people with a special disposition for vivid dreams had long and detailed visions, full of medical meaning; they saw operations performed, remedies applied; they heard of devices which were fraught with medical implications. How is this to be understood? The framework of such visions was given by the fact that the god who was approached was himself a physician.²² He could act therefore only in accordance with the established rules of his craft, and these rules were well known to the dreamers. For in antiquity, medicine was not yet a science working behind the closed doors of hospitals and universities, unintelligible in its technical detail to the untrained layman. Surgical treatment, as well as that by remedies or diet, was a matter of common knowledge; everybody could see how drugs were prepared and given, how bandages were applied. People were used to watching the performance of operations, or

as a reflection of daytime experiences is well in accord with the only rational explanation of dreams proposed in antiquity (Herodotus, VII, 16, 2 [Loeb]): "Those visions that rove about us in dreams are for the most part the thoughts of the day" (*πεπλανῆσθαι αὐται μάλιστα ἐώθασιν αἱ ὕψεις τῶν ὀνειράτων, τὰ τις ἡμέρης φροντίζει*).

²¹ T. 449a serves to prove that even a man like Aristides was not always successful in having magnificent dreams.

²² I need hardly point out that the dreams of the worshippers of Asclepius provide one of the strongest proofs for the explanation of the nature of the god as it was given above, pp. 79; 84, just as this explanation, it seems to me, is the only one that makes the dreams themselves understandable. Usually modern scholars are inclined to take the medical character of the dreams as self-evident. Such a view is hardly justified. For any god, except one who is a physician himself, the dignified way of healing would be that of making the disease disappear without any technical intervention. If in other cults of later times, down to those of the Christian saints, medical dreams are attested, this, in my opinion, is due to the influence of the Asclepius cult. Herzog seems the only one to have noticed that the content of the dreams poses a problem. Since for him Asclepius is an old chthonian god, he believes that the epiphany of Asclepius and his medical procedure are later additions made after the god had become the patron of the Asclepiads (*Wunderheilungen*, pp. 143 f.). Apart from the objections to the basic assumptions of Herzog, how could the priests of Asclepius—or anyone else—have succeeded in making the worshippers dream of medical subjects, had not everybody believed that this god was a physician and the hero of doctors?

of any other kind of treatment. They were familiar even with medical theories. Physicians were wont to discuss their cases with the patients themselves and with the families and friends of their clients; they gave public lectures on problems relating to their art. The upper classes were always well versed in medicine; in late antiquity, medical instruction constituted part of general education. People of lower standing, on the other hand, were in the habit of doing a good deal of their own doctoring; many of the country districts never had any physicians in residence. Simple folk exchanged their experiences with their fellow men, especially with those who were well reputed for their wisdom; they tried to learn as much as possible, so as to be prepared for emergencies. Given such a situation, given such a relationship of the layman to health and its preservation and to disease and its treatment, it is not astonishing to find that some of the dreams, even a great many of them, were so technical in content.²³

Indeed all the main features of these visions are clear reflections of the patients' every-day experiences. Not only did people see the god operating upon themselves, as they had seen the human doctor operating upon their friends, not only did they hear him give advice, as they had received prescriptions from their physicians, they argued with the god when they were displeased with his procedure (T. 427), as they were wont to argue with their doctors. They appealed to him for speedy recovery (T. 432), as they demanded quick relief from those who treated them in ordinary life. They were reminded by the god to pay his fees (T. 423, 25), just as it used to happen when they were under the care of human beings.²⁴ A child would offer ten dice to the god as an honorarium (T. 423, 8). In addition to being healed, a boxer would learn boxing tricks from him (T. 423, 29; cf. 317, 11).

To be sure, the dreams made the god appear to be doing the impossible. But was he not a god? They made him appear to be prescribing remedies which the human doctor would not have given. But why should the patients otherwise have consulted the god? Moreover, although in all these dreams Asclepius seemed to perform the impossible and to prescribe even the paradoxical, he did nothing that did not follow with perfect

²³ As regards Hippocratic medicine, cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, Chap. 3. The ancients were familiar with medical problems also on account of the importance of dietetics for the healthy, cf. *Die Antike*, VII, 1931, pp. 255 ff.

²⁴ Cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, *loc. cit.* It is this realistic reflection of daily life which explains the many amusing features of the dreams, the business-like attitude of the god. To refer to the avidity of the priests is quite unnecessary, certain as it is that they were intent on getting their money.

logic from what people had seen or heard. His deeds kept abreast with the changing knowledge of the centuries, but at the same time they were superior and fulfilled the most daring wishes of men.

The god made incisions into the body of his patient, he used cupping glasses on him (T. 426), he bound him to a door knocker (T. 423, 27), he suspended him head down (T. 423, 21). All this was done also by the average doctor.²⁵ In the fourth century B. C. surgery was very much in vogue, great progress was accomplished; in the same century the god acted as a daring surgeon (T. 423, 13). In the first century A. D. surgery again advanced considerably; consequently in that period the god of Pergamum was especially good at operating (T. 412). But the god was able to cut more deeply into the human frame than any human doctor could do (T. 423, 21; 23). The Hippocratic physician exclaimed: "So, then, the impossibility of reducing such a dislocation either by succussion or any other method is obvious, unless after cutting open the patient, one inserted the hand into the body cavity and made pressure from within outwards. One might do this with a corpse, but hardly with a living patient. Why then am I writing this?" Only the god was capable of operating on a living man as if he were a dead body.²⁶

²⁵ For the binding of patients to a door, cf. Hippocrates, IV, p. 92 L.; for suspension head down cf. e. g. Hippocrates, VIII, p. 318 L.; Soranus, IV, 36, 7; and Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 77. Unfortunately the later surgery of the god is known only from T. 426. Here Asclepius uses a cupping instrument on a woman who comes to him for the sake of offspring. Hippocrates recommends the use of this instrument for the stoppage of the menses (IV, p. 550 L.); cf. Herzog, *ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁶ Hippocrates, *On Joints*, ch. 46 (Hippocrates, III, p. 293 [Loeb]). For surgery in the fourth century B. C. (Praxagoras), cf. K. Sudhoff, *Quellen u. Stud. z. Gesch. d. Medizin*, III, 1932, pp. 347 ff.; for surgery in the first century A. D., cf. Celsus, *De Medicina*, VII, praef. Herzog denies that the operations outlined on the Epidaurian inscriptions are reflections of the contemporary surgery and considers them the products of a fantasy stimulated by the doings of butchers and embalmers, as well as by fairy tales (*Wunderheilungen*, pp. 83 f.). His opinion is based on the fact that it was only Praxagoras who dared to make incisions into the abdomen similar to those described in T. 423, 25; 27 (*op. cit.*, pp. 75 f.), while the cutting off of the head described in T. 423, 21; 23, is of course a plain impossibility. But the Hippocratic passage referred to above shows that even physicians, and before the time of Praxagoras at that, ventilated the idea of what might be accomplished if one were able to cut open a human being like a corpse. That the god should be able to achieve what man cannot do is his divine prerogative. And how is one to understand the similarities which Herzog himself has proved to exist between real operations and those dreamed of, unless the latter are reflections of the former? In Herzog's opinion, who believes that the priests surely went over the content of the miracles, if they did not actually compose them (*op. cit.*, p. 57), it was the intention of the tales to show that the therapy of the god was not identical with that of human physicians (p. 66). This assumption cannot be proved. For if in no. 48 of the Epidaurian tablets the god advises a patient not to submit to the surgery of the physician and then proceeds to heal him without an operation (cf. Herzog, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 ff.), this dream seems to mean nothing but the well-understandable wish on the part of the sick to avoid painful treatment. Moreover, the important point about these

Asclepius gave remedies. Nothing astonishing about that,—his human colleagues did so, too. If the divine drugs were specified at all, they were the same as people were used to taking. Only their effect was infinitely better and more far-reaching than that of common drugs. When the limited pharmacopoeia of the Hippocratics in course of time had been extended, the god, too, knew a greater variety of remedies. He gave compound prescriptions (T. 410), as was customary among doctors. When diet, bathing and exercise had become fashionable means of human treatment, the god, too, made use of them (T. 407). Why was that so, why did the dreams change? Not because the god or the priests had learned medicine, but rather because those who dreamed knew of a more elaborate therapy than they had known before.

The god relied on the help of animals: serpents licked the patients' bodies (T. 421, *vv.* 732 ff.). He also prescribed the blood of a cock (T. 438). In popular medicine, being licked by animals was always considered helpful. The poison extracted from snakes, even in Galen's opinion, was very advantageous for the treatment of certain diseases. Animals were used as a sympathetic remedy by many physicians.²⁷ The touching of the body with the hand (T. 423, 31), or the foot (T. 423, 3), even the divine kiss (T. 423, 41) reëcho the medical belief or imagination of the people. The god was not choosy in his means of healing; he integrated into his medicine all that was ever regarded as efficacious.²⁸ For men in their dreams made him trust in everything on which they themselves relied.

miracles is that although they are performed without pain, the dreamer afterwards remembers the god as operating. Herzog's position is determined by the belief that Epidaurus was hostile to laical medicine (pp. 152 f.), while other temples, where physicians cooperated (pp. 148 f.), were favorably inclined toward it. Nor does he take into account the fact that the pattern of medicine which the dreams follow was well known to the people at large.

²⁷ For the licking by animals, cf. H. Scholz, *Der Hund in der griech.-röm. Magie u. Religion*, Diss. Berl., 1937, pp. 12 f.; 23. For Galen's opinion on snake poison, cf. J. Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, XV, 1905, p. 298. Sympathetic remedies were applied by human physicians relatively late, cf. Edelstein, *Bull. of the Inst. of the Hist. of Med.*, V, 1937, pp. 229 ff. It is in accordance with this fact that after 300 B. C. such drugs were used more frequently by the god, too.

²⁸ For healing with the hand, the foot, or through a kiss, cf. the parallels gathered by Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 67 ff.; 73 ff.; cf. also T. C. Albutt, *Greek Medicine in Rome*, 1921, pp. 33 ff. For the "divine tablet" (T. 444), cf. O. Weinreich, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, X, 1907, pp. 566 f.; for the hair miracle (T. 423, 19), cf. Weinreich, *Abh. Heid. Akad.*, 1924-25, no. 7. Those dreams in which serpents were seen having intercourse with women (T. 423, 39; 42) presuppose the belief in the serpent as the symbol of the phallus, cf. Küster, *R. G. V. V.*, XIII, 2, 1913, p. 149. Note moreover that in other cases the god begets offspring by touching the body of the patient with his own hand (T. 423, 31). Then again the apparition of a serpent is taken as the revelation of the god's healing power (T. 445; cf. also T. 423, 33), because the serpent was sacred to Asclepius, cf. below, pp. 227 ff. For the healing power ascribed to the red color (T. 421, *v.* 731), cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 97.

The dreams, then, which people claimed to have had, and which they doubtless did have, are easy to understand despite their technical content. But how did the patients get well if they only dreamed? How could they feel instant relief after having had merely a vision? How could they recover by means of a chance treatment that was based on dreamed remedies, or on a fantastic interpretation of dream pictures?

As for instantaneous healings, there is little doubt that in some cases nervous disturbances were involved, which were cured through the exaltation of the soul, through the confidence in the miracle that was expected to happen. It was not for nothing that the god in the dream vision asked his patient to have courage, to be no coward, to walk even though he had been unable to walk before (T. 423, 35; 37; also 16; 38), to bring to the temple as large a rock as he could carry, although he was paralyzed in body (T. 423, 15). It actually happens that people suddenly regain the movement of their limbs through a shock, through any kind of excitement, be it joy or sadness, that they become able to move their fingers again (T. 423, 3), even though they may have been stiff for a long time. Nor is it impossible that a boy should recover his voice (T. 423, 5) and speak once more. Eyesight too occasionally returns all of a sudden (T. 423, 11; 20; 22); blindness may be but a passing disorder.²⁹ On the other hand, in many instances spontaneous healing may have come about well timed by fate. A fever could supervene and thus heal epilepsy (T. 425). An abscess could open by itself and blood then would cover the floor (T. 423, 27). An arrow point could come out of a festering wound (T. 423, 12; 30; 32) through the healing power of nature. It is also conceivable that a stone was ejected together with a seminal discharge (T. 423, 14; also 8). Nor can one raise much objection against the assertion that the sick vomited, that the peccant matter was expelled, and when day came was found all over their clothes, whereupon they became well (T. 423, 41).³⁰ This god did not turn only

²⁹ True, it takes a believer in the divine to become convinced of the fact that the god healed also those who had not even one eyeball left (T. 423, 9). But then, the Epidaurian inscriptions, medical as their content may be, are not the diary of a physician, and the further advanced the decay of the body, the greater the power of the god who can restore it! This much can be said even if one holds—as there are good reasons to do—that generally speaking the Epidaurian inscriptions are realistic and do not exaggerate unduly. I have dealt only with the most remarkable cases which may possibly be accounted for by nervous disorders and which constitute the famous topics of all divine healing that has at all times made the blind see, the lame walk, the mute speak. Such small matters as the cure of headaches and insomnia (T. 423, 29), or of baldness (T. 423, 19) need not detain anyone.

³⁰ T. 423, 13 is a parallel example, although the fact that the patient upon awaking finds leeches in his hands, hardly enhances the likelihood of the story. One should

to the soul of his patient to help it in the recovery of the body. Pestered by the sick like every human physician, he was willing "to see dire sights, and to touch unpleasant things, and in the woes of others to reap sorrow for himself" (T. 392); he allowed his sacred *abaton* to become a hospital ward; he had no aversion to the natural, and therefore nature itself may have proved unusually cooperative.⁸¹

Yet not all diseases, and particularly not the more serious ones, are known to heal spontaneously or through an effort of the soul. If it is assumed, as surely it must be, that throughout the centuries people recovered in the Asclepieia in the twinkling of an eye, whatever their ailment—then temple medicine really seems but a miracle, the more so since men took refuge in the sanctuaries when human help no longer availed, when they had been given up by their physicians, when they were considered hopeless cases (T. 404; 438; 582).⁸² However, one must not be swayed by such statements. In antiquity, the doctor's assistance failed much sooner than it does today: the knowledge which he had at his disposal was infinitely smaller than is that of his modern colleague; he could actually help in infinitely fewer instances than is possible nowadays. Besides, there was reluctance on the part of the Greek physician to assume responsibility whenever he was not certain of his success. He had to guard his reputation, which would have been seriously threatened by failure; it was also considered the duty and the proper attitude of a good doctor not to undertake what he was unable to carry through.⁸³ Consequently, the number of hopeless cases, of patients given up by physicians, was much larger than it is under modern conditions, and accordingly the chances were much greater that among these so-called hopeless cases there were some who could still recover spontaneously, or at least get better. At any rate, this much is certain: Asclepius' patients were easily satisfied, they were grateful even for small benefits. Libanius acknowledges that in three dreams the god took away no small part of his sickness, and he adds that thus it was brought to a stage "which he

remember, however, that ancient physicians were of the opinion that polluted fluids may contain leeches which, if swallowed, may cause sickness; cf. Hippocrates, IX, pp. 42 f. L.; Galen, XIX, p. 88 K.; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 82. T. 423, 21 and 25 are perhaps to be understood in the same way as T. 423, 41.

⁸¹ In some of the Christian churches where the saints performed their healings there was a similar atmosphere of the operating room (parallels with the Asclepius cures have been collected by Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 75 ff.). But here, such naturalistic traits are only accidental, and some of the reports obviously were written in competition with the miracles of Asclepius.

⁸² Cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 195 ff.; Edelstein, *Bulletin of the Inst. of the History of Medicine*, V, 1937, pp. 244 f.

⁸³ Cf. Edelstein, *ibid.*, pp. 224 ff.; 244.

may never take away" (T. 447). Even subsidence of the illness was a miracle (T. 445).⁸⁴ In many cases it was probably the symptoms alone that disappeared, pains ceased to excruciate the sick. No testimony avers how long the healing effect lasted, just as the diseases are seldom specified. And yet, ever so often the disappearance of the symptoms, the relaxation of pain may have coincided with the recovery brought about by nature; many of the patients whom the god healed at the spur of the moment, scoring a victory over his human competitors, were not quite so sick after all.⁸⁵

The fact that some of the suppliants suffered from relatively slight disorders, though in antiquity they were diagnosed as very ill indeed, and the other that many people came to the sanctuaries who had not consulted a physician before, because they could find no doctor or because they preferred to doctor themselves—these facts should be kept in mind if one now turns to those cases in which the god prescribed a definite treatment, thus curing his patients by means of a lesser miracle, and one not so much to his credit, yet one that from Hellenistic times seems to have been preferable to him.⁸⁶ Sometimes when giving drugs or advising a diet and physical or mental exercise, the god did exactly what the human doctor would have done. For people dreamed in accordance with their own knowledge, or instigated by their dreams they simply felt encouraged to apply their usual drugs, as Aristides relates that at the behest of Asclepius he was able to endure a medicine that he had previously

⁸⁴ Cf. also T. 425. The Epidaurian tablets are cautious enough not to mention what the god did in a case of consumption, and how he succeeded in his treatment; they prefer to relate instead that the patient went home and founded a shrine of Asclepius in his town (T. 423, 33).

⁸⁵ I need hardly say that I have no intention to show that all the healings ascribed to Asclepius can be explained rationally; they certainly cannot. Leaving aside the non-medical miracles recorded on the Epidaurian tablets (T. 423, 10; cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 123 ff.)—such stories as T. 423, 1 and 2 are plain miracles, although it is true, as Herzog has shown (p. 71), that Hippocratic physicians did not think a pregnancy of many years impossible (even in the *Journal des Savans* of 1678, pp. 305; 348, the possibility of a pregnancy of 26 years was seriously discussed—the child being extracted from the dead body of the mother, and Lessing, *Sämmtliche Schriften*, XI, 1839, p. 401, found this discussion worth noting). The significant point even in regard to the most incredible stories is again that at least the basic presuppositions are in agreement with the scientific beliefs of the times. It is also well to remember that some of the miracles hardly are miraculous (birth of children after one year from the visit in Epidaurus, T. 423, 34; 42; also 31, and T. 426), and that some do not even pretend to be miracles, as in the case of a man who was bitten by a goose and was cured because this made him bleed (T. 423, 43; cf. 26; 17). Incidentally, I have selected only the most characteristic cases and types. For an analysis of the entire Epidaurian material Herzog's commentary (*Wunderheilungen*) remains indispensable. Herzog has printed also those inscriptions which have been omitted from the collection of testimonies because they are too badly mutilated.

⁸⁶ Cf. above, p. 152.

abhorred (T. 410). Moreover, many people, having been told by the god what to do, nursed their ailments, while otherwise they would scarcely have done so at all, or at any rate not so painstakingly, had the regimen been prescribed by a human doctor; they were willing to do things that they would never have done at the request of their regular physicians, as Galen says (T. 401). Asclepius' success in these cases is not much more astounding than the success of Galen himself, or of Hippocrates, or of any other ancient physician.

Still, following the suggestion of the god the sick would take exercise when they themselves or their physicians would have been in favor of rest; they applied warm water where the practitioner of the day would have used cold water, or vice versa. In these instances, the procedure was paradoxical, that is, contrary to the established principles of Greek medicine.⁸⁷ Furthermore, people took fantastic remedies, they followed chance precepts resulting from their interpretation of the dreams. How, then, could they become healthy? As regards rest or exercise, warm or cold ablutions in the treatment of certain diseases, have there been no divergencies of opinion between the various generations of doctors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and even among the doctors of one and the same generation? And have patients not recovered, or died, whatever procedure was adopted? Is not the same more or less true of dieting or fasting, of drinking wine or abstaining from it, and of other things? As for drugs and their success, again one must not tacitly parallel ancient and modern medicine and judge the prescriptions ordained by the god in the light of the science of today. Ashes of burnt sacrifices, or other remedies of that type administered by the god (*e. g.* T. 438) were not necessarily of less avail than excrements of doves or goats applied by ancient physicians.⁸⁸ Moreover, Hippocrates and Galen, when giving drugs, made their choice according to experience, the latter even according to fanciful theories concerning the qualities inherent in plants or minerals or animals. The dosage of remedies, although based on observation, remained arbitrary. Those sciences which for modern treatment guarantee a certain accuracy, by studying the reactions of the drugs on the one hand, and of the tissues of the human body on the other, thus allowing precise correlation of the effect of the remedy to the needs of the organism—these two sciences, chemistry and experimental pharmacology, were unknown in antiquity. There was no objective standard by

⁸⁷ Cf. above, pp. 153 f.

⁸⁸ Such remedies were applied by Galen, especially in his country practice; cf. XIII, p. 633 K.; XII, p. 298 K. In general, cf. Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 306. On the whole, the "Dreckapotheke" plays an important part in ancient pharmacology; cf. also T. 369.

which men could be guided, a fact that ancient physicians never tired of conceding and lamenting. The pharmacology of Asclepius was also based on experience, and his patients too in applying their dream prescriptions, which in most cases were made up of the usual healing matter, guessed sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly; perhaps more often wrongly, for despite their considerable knowledge of medicine, they lacked the life-long experience of the physician. On the other hand, it may well be that the simple prescriptions, which laymen derived from their dreams, were more effective than those complicated drugs or salves which ancient physicians loved to concoct;³⁹ that the sojourn at the Asclepieion had in fact as good an influence on the patient as the practice of being carried around in litters, or whatever else Greek and Roman doctors imagined to contribute to health and recovery from disease. In short, if ancient medicine is seen as it really was, if the treatment which it could provide is taken at its true value, the miracles of the god seem less miraculous—or else, I think, it must be admitted that in the given circumstances it was almost as miraculous that those who were taken care of by human doctors so often recovered.⁴⁰

Therefore, even if the patients of Asclepius only dreamed, even if their cures were only a rationalization of what they believed they had seen, it is not astonishing that the Asclepieia could claim so many real healings. The god himself, or his priests never asserted that he could do everything, nor did they promise immortality; they promised assistance.⁴¹ The

³⁹ Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, p. 122), in analyzing the Apellas inscription, says: "Im ganzen stimmt Apellas, wie mich dünkt, die abenteuerlichen Vorstellungen von den Asklepioskuren, die man aus der Lektüre des Aristides gewinnt, auf ein menschliches Mass herab. Und es ist wohl möglich, dass diese 'natürlichen' Heilmethoden, wie wir sagen, 'göttlichen,' wie das Altertum sagt, gegenüber den ungeheuren Mixturen, die Galen und seine methodischen wie empirischen Kollegen verschrieben, ihre Berechtigung hatten." Wilamowitz, here, is nearer the truth than he is in his later condemnation of temple cures (*Glaube*, II, pp. 229; 231). Cf. also Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 273: "... the treatment is more sensible than an eighteenth-century physician would probably have prescribed; it consists chiefly in diet and exercise, and an appeal to the will-power of the patient: the god is eminently rational and considerate; he advises Apellas not to irritate himself. . . ."

⁴⁰ Recognition of the achievements of Greek medicine must not blind one to its shortcomings. The greatness of the ancient medical art consisted in the observation of phenomena, especially of the individuality of the patient, in reliance on experience, on the intuition of the doctor, in rational elucidation of the possibilities of medicine, in the courage to explore methods, to outline programs, to start investigations in almost every field. The treatment, too, sometimes seems surprisingly adequate, and often great success may have been attained. Yet there was no scientific system of therapy in the modern sense of the term. While in their general attitude the ancients still are the masters of the moderns, in practical matters,—to modify a famous saying of Darwin—they were mere school boys compared to the moderns.

⁴¹ In T. 739 it is frankly told that the Epidaurian temple had a building where people could die without desecrating the holiness of the sacred district. One should also re-

ancients, believing in gods as they did, were wont to turn to the deity in quest of help; they did so in every matter, however small and trivial; they did so particularly in circumstances which were serious and threatening. Disease, the fear of death, was a condition which made even the sceptic a devotee of the divine;⁴² and people found help, or at least relief from suffering in their communication with him who among their deities was best versed in medicine.

Is it not a matter of common experience that even grave illnesses sometimes heal contrary to the expectations of the most experienced and best trained physician of the twentieth century? Does it not frequently happen even today that, when all has been done for the patient that is humanly possible, the doctor has to admit that only a miracle can save him? And the miracle sometimes happens. Men of today ascribe it to nature; men of antiquity ascribed it to the deity, though sometimes, if they were asked by the god to pay their fees, they remembered that diseases heal by themselves (T. 540)! Unless it is simply true that the gods in ancient times performed miracles and only left this world of ours as of old "did Justice loathe that race of men and fly heavenward,"⁴³ there are good reasons for the success which nature and the experience of the suppliants brought about in the temples of Asclepius.

4. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE HEALING

Disease is a serious calamity, not only on account of the physical dangers that it involves, but also because it carries with it a heavy economic burden. The ancients were well aware of this fact; even the idealist Plato stressed it to the utmost.¹ Nor was the civic importance of medicine overlooked. Nay, in late centuries it was a favorite topic of discussion, whether the rhetor or the philosopher or the physician was the most valuable citizen, and whereas the philosopher was decried as a subversive character, the rhetor as a revolutionary, and neither therefore of any good for the state, the physician was praised as most useful for the community since he gives assistance to everybody where the others

member that men like Aristides felt that, if the god was not willing to help, it was time for them to die, cf. above, p. 130. Herzog (*Wunderheilungen*, p. 142) has drawn attention to the fact that for the Asclepius cult the miracle of reviving the dead is never attested. This is significant and indicative of the caution and rationality of priests and worshippers alike. But I should add that the healings themselves were understood by the patients as revivals, they were reborn through Asclepius; cf. above, p. 124.

⁴² Cf. Edelstein, *Bulletin of the Inst. of the History of Medicine*, V, p. 244.

⁴³ Aratus, *Phaenomena*, 133-34 [Loeb].

¹ Cf. *Republic*, III, 406 D-E.

fail.² The social and political aspects of the problems connected with medicine and medical care, then, were clearly recognized in antiquity, and it is pertinent to ask how far the divine physician too took an interest in the economic difficulties of his suppliants and how far he was conscious of his obligations towards the commonwealth.

To evaluate Asclepius' position properly, however, one must first point out that the social risks of disease were great indeed in the ancient world due to its political structure and to the almost complete lack of any feeling of social responsibility on the part of the individual.³ Of course, it was only in the lower strata of society that these risks prevailed. The rich had money to take care of themselves, to "nurture" their disease; to them, sickness was something that they dreaded and detested, because it was incompatible with their concept of a perfect human being.⁴ Although such a reaction was certainly not entirely foreign to those who did not belong to the well-to-do—every natural and unsophisticated person has an instinctive aversion to disease and the disqualification which it entails—for the middle classes and the poor it must have been the economic damage resulting from sickness of which they were most afraid. If the small businessmen, the craftsmen, could not work, they lost their income; they had hardly any other means of paying for their livelihood; no insurance system provided money for the time during which they were incapacitated; consequently they themselves and their families faced hunger, if not starvation.⁵ If their illness led to any permanent disablement, their lot was even more horrible. Some of the cities, though reluctantly, assisted their citizens when they had become unable to work. Generally speaking, however, those who could no longer earn what they needed were utterly lost; they had to live in the most pitiful circumstances. Whether the proletarians were taken care of when ill or found

² Cf. Ps. Quintilian, *Declamationes*, no. 268, p. 92 f. [Ritter]; cf. also Quintilian, *Institut.*, VII, 1, 38; 4, 39. Herzog, *S.B. Berl.*, 1935, p. 982, has discussed these passages in their significance for the competition between the various university faculties; their social implications are even more important. That in many cases the decision may have been made in favor of the rhetor or of the philosopher need hardly be stressed.

³ For the problem of social responsibility in antiquity, cf. W. J. Woodhouse, *E. R. E.*, III, pp. 386 f., s. v. Charity (Greek); J. S. Reid, *ibid.*, pp. 391 f. (Roman); especially H. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit u. Armenfürsorge im vorchristlichen Altertum*, 1939; cf. his article in *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 12, No. 2, 1939.

⁴ For the difference between this concept and that prevalent in other societies, where disease was sin or, as in Christianity, a certain distinction, cf. H. E. Sigerist, *Medicine and Human Welfare*, 1941, pp. 16 ff.

⁵ All that has been said here is implied by Plato, *Republic*, III, 406 D-E. That even the guilds of later centuries did not provide any medical insurance for their members, has been shown by H. E. Sigerist, *Mitt. z. Gesch. d. Med. u. d. Naturwiss.*, XXV, 1926, pp. 65 ff.

any assistance at all, no state, no private individual was anxious to inquire.⁶

On the other hand, medical care was expensive; physicians wanted to make money and were not ashamed of admitting it. In medical literature there are innumerable admonitions to the effect that the doctor should be more interested in his patients than in his fees; Galen prided himself on treating senators and slaves with the same scrupulousness.⁷ Philanthropy was the ideal set before the physician. Yet, with the necessary allowance for individual kindness and willingness to help even without adequate remuneration physicians on the whole were businessmen, and no moral or professional code enforced by the state or by an association or by religious organizations obliged them to give their service to the needy.⁸ Some of the great cities had doctors in residence who were paid by the community, but even such an official status did not exclude their receiving or even demanding remuneration from their patients.⁹ The hospitals of which these public physicians were in charge and to whose equipment the city contributed were run on a business basis. Patients who could not pay for their stay had no claim to be treated free of charge. Again, although help was certainly given in some of these cases without recompense, there were no vested rights of receiving assistance in sickness, no claims secured by legislation. Everything was left to the discretion of the individual.¹⁰

The economic threat of disease, then, to the lower and middle classes was grave, graver perhaps than at any later time. It is with this fact in mind that one must consider the tribute which is paid by the testimonies to the god Asclepius who gave help cheaply. He was well known for being satisfied with small thank-offerings (T. 482, *vv.* 79 ff.); it was one of his claims to fame and admiration that he took care of the poor (T. 405),

⁶ Cf. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 387: "The ruthlessness [*sc.* in matters of charity] of ancient society, in which one must be hammer or anvil, is largely concealed from us by the fact that, with few exceptions, it is only the class which enjoys wealth and power that is articulate; that is to say, ancient literature is mainly aristocratic in origin." It is only fair to add that the lack of social responsibility was partly compensated by a stronger family feeling, cf. Woodhouse, *loc. cit.*, p. 386. For the later change in the attitude of the individual, cf. below, pp. 177 f.

⁷ Cf. *e. g.* C. M. G., I, 1, p. 32, 4 ff.; Galen, X, 613 ff. K.; Ilberg, *N. Jahrb.*, 1905, p. 309.

⁸ Concerning Hippocratic medicine, cf. Edelstein, *Problemata*, IV, Ch. III. The situation did not change essentially later on, as can easily be concluded from the income of physicians in the Roman empire, cf. L. Friedlaender, *Sittengeschichte*, I, 1919, pp. 195 f.

⁹ R. Pohl, *De Graecorum medicis publicis*, pp. 57 ff., rightly concludes from the inscriptions preserved that the public physicians were allowed to accept money, since it is especially stressed in honorary titles if and when they did not make any distinction between rich and poor patients.

¹⁰ Concerning private and public hospitals in antiquity, cf. Th. Meyer-Steinagel, *Kranken-Anstalten im griechisch-römischen Altertum*, *Jenaer medizin-hist. Beiträge*, III, 1912, especially pp. 10 ff. Hospitals for slaves (*ibid.*, pp. 31 ff.) and soldiers (*ibid.*, pp. 34 ff.) are of course a different matter.

and he had done so from the very beginning of his career.¹¹ This charitable attitude was, so to speak, part of his being. The ancients thought that, as a terrestrial god, he was by nature the god of the destitute (T. 259).¹²

While it is certain from the evidence available that Asclepius' cures were of great importance for the paupers, it is very difficult to ascertain in detail in what way and to what extent the god showed his generosity. Whenever he deigned to relieve his patients immediately through a miracle, it is clear why such a cure was not expensive; naturally, in these cases he did not find the offering of a cock less attractive or less acceptable than that of hecatombs of oxen. But what was the situation if the god prescribed a treatment, if it was necessary for the sick to remain in his sanctuary for quite some time, if they had to apply remedies which they could not afford? Evidence regarding the god's reaction, or rather that of his priests, in such circumstances is rather scanty. Yet it seems permissible to combine the few data known with those testimonies which speak of the care of the poor in other ancient temples and thus to surmise how the god's help was administered to the needy.

First of all, the Asclepieia, like other sanctuaries, had special buildings where the worshippers could live. Such houses are known from Pergamum and other places.¹³ Modern scholars used to take it for granted that the priests charged a certain amount for lodging, and that these houses were used by pilgrims only on festive occasions. It has now become increasingly clear that these hostels in fact represent the first form of the Christian hospitals or poorhouses, that these institutions were taken over by the Church along with the pagan temples. In late antiquity, at any rate, most temples provided refuge for the poor without exacting any fee from them, and it is improbable that the Asclepius temples formed an exception from this general development.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. above, p. 84. That the statement of Aelian (T. 405) goes back to the old comedy, has been shown by F. V. Fritzsche in his edition of the *Thesmophoriazousae*, 1838, pp. 380 f. Herondas' testimony (T. 482) confirms the fact that the god's generosity was recognized by everybody at an early date. The Epidaurian inscriptions tell the same story, cf. *e.g.* T. 423, 8.

¹² As has been pointed out above, pp. 116 f., Asclepius' clientele was not restricted to the poor, though they formed a considerable section of his patients. Here I only wish to draw attention to one aspect of temple medicine which must have had a special attraction for the lower classes.

¹³ Cf. T. 719 and T. 499; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 155; for Pergamum, cf. H. Hepding, *Philologus*, LXXXVIII, 1933, p. 102; in general, Bolkestein, *Ξένων, Mededeeel. d. Koningkl. Akad. van Wetens.*, Afd. Letterkunde, Deel 84, Ser. B. No. 3, 1937, p. 23. A corresponding institution were the *καταλύματα* in the temples of Sarapis; cf. Bolkestein, *ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁴ Bolkestein (*op. cit.*, p. 39) has shown that Christian charity, although unique in its scope and its motif, was preceded by a gradual change in the attitude of the pagans.

But where did the means come from if the god advised a lengthy cure and remedies which the patient could not afford? Did the priests in that case say: "Go home, it is impossible for you to follow the god's counsel"? This is, indeed, unlikely. Even if it is assumed that the primary interest of the priesthood consisted in securing great revenues for their sanctuaries, they must have realized that sometimes it is wise to be generous and that money spent on the poor was a profitable investment. For whoever had been helped free of charge certainly did not minimize in his reports the greatness of the deeds of the god. Nor can one believe that the priests of Asclepius, the god who was called the most philanthropic of all deities (T. 422; 804, 5), should have entirely lacked the prime virtue of their master. Other priests, in conformity with the philanthropy of their gods, did not only offer feasts and banquets to those who at the festival of the deity came to the sanctuary, but sheltered them during their visit and made a present of money to everybody, rich or poor, free or slave.¹⁵ In the Asclepieia, the treatment of the patients was the highest exultation, the perpetual manifestation of the god. Out of kindness the priests of Asclepius, at least occasionally, must have provided the resources for the therapy prescribed by the god. Actually not much was needed as far as expense was concerned. Baths could certainly be offered free of charge; exercises in the gymnasium hardly required admission fees. There remained then only the cost of drugs and purgatives and similar things. Weighing the whole evidence carefully, it is no exaggeration to claim that in many instances the temples, especially the great sanctuaries, put whatever was necessary at the disposal of those patients who were unable to pay.

Moreover, as time went on, the temples were certainly relieved of much of the burden laid upon them by needy patients through the munificence of their rich clientele. No doubt, in the truly Greek society of old the sick could not expect any assistance from their more opulent fellow sufferers, though disease sometimes may have opened the heart of the greatest sinner to the claims made upon him by the misery of his neighbor.¹⁶ But in Hellenistic centuries, and in the Roman period, the

¹⁵ Cf. H. Oppermann, *Zeus Panamaros*, *R.G.V.V.*, XIX, 3, 1924, pp. 61 f., and Bolkestein, *op. cit.*, 1937, pp. 28 f.

¹⁶ Cf. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 386: "[Almsgiving] was not inculcated as an item of a national ideal of conduct, reflected back upon the individual as a command of religious or philosophical sanctity. So much is true, at any rate, of the Greeks of the great age, in whom the instinct of generosity existed only in rudimentary form." Of course, exceptions to the general rule can never be excluded. When in the fourth century B. C. a private citizen donated a house to Asclepius (T. 729), he probably stipulated that it should be used for the benefit of the public. For the interpretation of T. 729, cf. R. Schlaifer, *Class. Phil.*, XXXVIII, 1943, pp. 39 ff.

situation changed a great deal. Stoic philosophy instigated a reversal of the attitude of the wealthy and infused the virtue of generosity toward the paupers into the ideal of humaneness.¹⁷ Most important, for the aristocracy generosity became part of their devotion to the divine. Gifts, says Plutarch, "should be made at the proper time and for good and worthy reasons, that is, in connection with the reverence paid to the deity which kindles piety in everyone. For whenever the many see that men whom they respect and consider great show zeal toward the divine by being generous and liberal, they feel a strong conviction and belief that the godhead is great and holy."¹⁸ It is in this spirit that Aristides was told by the god to distribute money among his fellow pilgrims (T. 504). It is in the same spirit that Antoninus erected buildings in Epidaurus for the use of women in childbirth and of those who were near death (T. 739).¹⁹ From every point of view, then, it is most unlikely that those patients who had no sufficient means or no means whatever, had to leave the temples without being able to follow the advice of the god. In late centuries, private charity, if not the charity of the priests themselves, must have allowed them to stay on, to defray their personal expenses, and even to give a tip to the bath attendant, an action which the god did not refrain from urging upon his rich patients either (T. 432).

Under these circumstances it seems safe to say that in a world in which the poor were left to their fate by the state or by the communities at large, where laical medicine did not know of any special provisions for the needy, the Asclepieia and religious medicine were of the greatest importance for the medical welfare of the lower classes. To be sure, the heathens could never compete with the Christians in their efforts on behalf of the destitute. But when the Church made it its express aim to take care of the sick, when Christ invited to His temples all those who were ill and troubled by diseases as well as by poverty, He was in this respect, too, the fulfiller of a task which Asclepius had at least dimly visualized.²⁰

Considering the fact that the ancient god of medicine was well aware of his social responsibility, it is the more astonishing that he never showed any interest in the political aspect of medical care, that he did

¹⁷ Cf. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

¹⁸ *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, 30 (822 B). Bolkestein has stressed the importance of this passage, *op. cit.*, 1937, p. 29, n. 2, though in a different connection. In general, cf. also Friedlaender, *Sittengeschichte*, II, p. 377.

¹⁹ Antoninus probably was a character not unlike Herodes Atticus whose activities have been pictured by K. A. Neugebauer, *Die Antike*, X, 1934, pp. 92 ff.

²⁰ Cf. above, p. 137.

not realize his obligation toward the state. Plato had claimed (T. 124), to be sure, that even the hero Asclepius, in just recognition of the needs of the city, had restricted himself to a quick treatment of diseases. If he could not restore the health of his patients by some simple prescription, Plato said, he let them die; for men must go about their work and cannot spend their time in curing themselves, a truism which people are wont to overlook in the case of the rich, but which they well remember as concerns the poor. The hero Asclepius, then, in Plato's eyes, was "a most politic physician," who saw men as citizens and who asked whether his actions as a doctor agreed with the requirements of public life and with the demands of the state.²¹ Moreover, for Aristophanes, Asclepius was "a clever, patriotic god" (T. 421, v. 726). For he restores the sight of Plutus whom Zeus has blinded; thus riches will be distributed among men more justly than before. On the other hand, he blinds Neocles, the base extortioner, in order to make it impossible for him to do more harm.²² The god, however, followed Plato's ideals no more than he assumed the rôle which Aristophanes ascribed to him. Although he delighted in healing his patients instantaneously, he also applied treatment that meant that for weeks or months they could not work; he protracted their lives with all the means of dietetic medicine which Plato detested.²³ Nor did he care to eliminate the enemies of society, to punish those who were unworthy of the light of day. Although he did not appear to Alexander Severus (T. 395), apparently because that emperor was too great a villain, he allowed the tyrant Dionysius to die in his bed peacefully. The ancient sceptics were not slow in pointing out that Asclepius, if he were a true deity, should have done otherwise (T. 396; cf. 437), and the Christians too blamed him for having failed to do his part in matters of public concern (T. 507).

The censure brought against him did not impress the divine healer.

²¹ There is a strange resemblance between Plato's political interpretation of Asclepius and the interpretation of Christianity by modern Romanticists, such as Adam Müller, who claimed "dass Christus nicht für die Menschen, sondern für die Staaten gestorben sei," cf. G. A. Briefs, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, II, 1941, p. 285.

²² It is noteworthy that in Aristophanes the god sides with men and in doing so acts against the intentions of the supreme deity. This feature the poet probably derives from the old myth, cf. above, p. 48. Whether Aristophanes' whole description should be taken as "spöttische Schilderung" (Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 61; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 232), or whether it represents a "Huldigung für Asklepios" (Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 316 ff.) it is difficult to decide. Perhaps it is best to say with Nilsson (*Griechische Religion*, I, p. 739) that Asclepius just like the Eleusinian goddesses is treated with more respect because these deities were favored by the people. That Asclepius is made the butt of jokes is only natural in a comedy, and no conclusions can be drawn from this fact in regard to the poet's personal views.

²³ Cf. *Republic*, III, 406 A-B.

As a true physician, Asclepius was interested in individuals rather than in politics. His only concern was the disease and the patient who came to him in quest of help. Certainly, the god refused treatment on moral grounds; illness due to luxury and folly he did not cure (T. 398); he could not be bought (T. 394); he disliked the irreverent.²⁴ Yet, if his suppliant approached him in the hour of tribulation and honored him in the right way, the god did not ask what he had done before, what his usefulness was as a citizen, whether he was rich or poor—with his divine hand he took away sickness and suffering.

²⁴ Cf. above, pp. 113; 161.

IV. CULT

The interpretation of the temple medicine has shown what the god Asclepius did for men. How did men appeal to him for his support? "The gods of their own free will are prone to beneficence, but when invoked they are still better" (T. 538)—this statement fairly summarizes the attitude of the ancients. One cannot hope for divine succor if he does not ask for it, and he must do so in the right way. A rigid ritual dictates the forms of supplication and governs the relationship between man and gods.

Moreover, the deity demands continuous worship from his devotees. In antiquity a religion without rites, without sacrifices, processions, festivals, was inconceivable. To be sure, even for the ancients it was belief that created the ritual and found in it tangible expression. But if man did not perform the sacred ceremonies, the gods did not fulfill their task either, nor were they expected to do so. No wonder, says Porphyry, that our city is beset by diseases; since Christ is honored, Asclepius has not enjoyed any public service (T. 506). Such an assertion does not imply that rites were supposed to have any magic power over the gods. If this had been the conviction in prehistoric centuries, in historical times the ritual was rather the expression of the respect owed to the gods. One cannot even speak of an attitude of "I give that you may give." Men were bound to revere the deity who was their superior; those too who rejected the assumption that the help of the gods could be bought by prayers and sacrifices worshipped them devoutly. The cult was considered an intrinsic part of religion; it was the indispensable actualization of belief.¹

An analysis of the ritual seems requisite, therefore, for a proper representation of the Asclepius religion. It should also throw light on the peculiar character of the service paid to Asclepius. It should show whether new forms of religious observances were created in the worship of the new god. Of course one cannot hope to give an adequate picture of what took place in the temples, to represent fully the performances, to enumerate completely the accessories, to characterize the whole personnel

¹ Wilamowitz, *S. B. Berl.*, 1921, pp. 959 f., and *Glaube*, I, p. 137, tries to differentiate between ritual and religion. Pfister, *Bursian*, 1930, p. 54, opposes Wilamowitz' views. He is right in so far as an attitude like that of Wilamowitz might lead to a depreciation of the actual importance of the rites. S. Wide, *Gercke-Norden*, II, 1922, p. 235, in my opinion, overemphasizes the utilitarian aspect of the worship.

who shared in the service of the god. In regard to almost every detail, the data are scanty and incomplete. Moreover, the rules and ceremonies differed in the various sanctuaries. There was no generally accepted pattern of veneration in the Asclepius cult or in that of any other ancient deity. It is only a faint likeness of the old splendor and diversity that the modern interpreter can still conjure up by putting together the scattered statements that chance has preserved for him.²

1. RITUAL FOR THE HEALTHY

It was first of all Asclepius, the preserver of health, whom people approached. Not to fall into disease is the greatest boon to man. How frequently prayer and sacrifices were offered to this end, the testimony does not reveal. But there can be little doubt that this kind of "preventive medicine" based on religion was much in vogue among the ancients. Even Marcus Aurelius did not disdain the thought of climbing the citadel of Pergamum where the temple of Asclepius stood and of praying for the preservation of his teacher's health (T. 577). Innumerable others must have gone beyond thought, actually imploring the god in his sanctuary or in the privacy of their homes.³ Or again sacrifices were offered after a dream which was taken as a bad omen. By this means it was tried to ward off the threatening evil (T. 502; 454).⁴

Nor were such procedures restricted to individuals. In regular observances the Athenian priest asked the god's protection for the city (T. 553). With the same intent the Syracusans made an annual joint offering to Asclepius and Paean (T. 554).⁵ In Pergamum, hecatombs were dedicated to Asclepius, just as in Delphi they were offered to Apollo

² In this inquiry it will often be necessary to repeat what is a matter of common knowledge. But only if the data preserved are interpreted within the framework of ancient rituals, as they have become known through the research done during the past few decades, can the specific meaning of the testimonies concerning the Asclepius worship be established. On the other hand, in some instances, the reports in regard to Asclepius give the only or the best evidence for certain procedures that are known to have been customary also in the cults of other deities.

³ Wissowa, *Religion u. Kultus*, p. 308, has noticed the fact that "Aesculapius namentlich *pro salute alicuius* angerufen zu werden pflegte" (C. I. L., VI, 13; 19; XI, 2092 f.). Greek inscriptions tell the same story, e. g. I. G., II², 4372; cf. also T. 577a; 522; 537.

⁴ Prayers subsequent to a bad dream are also mentioned by medical writers; these authors, however, took such visions as indications of bodily disorders which should be treated by rational means, cf. Hippocrates, *On Regimen*, IV (VI, pp. 640 ff. L.).

⁵ Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 443, suggests that here Paean is identical with Apollo "da Paian ganz zu einer Epiklesis der grossen Götter herabgesunken ist." For similar offerings in Delos, cf. *ibid.*, p. 412; for Ceos, p. 421, n. 7; for Tamynae, p. 412; for Elaea, cf. O. Deubner, *Das Asklepieion von Pergamon*, 1938, p. 18 (sacrifice to Asclepius and Attalus). As regards Athens and a sacrifice for Asclepius and Hygieia on the day of the *Dissoteria*, cf. L. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, pp. 174 f.

(T. 569). Since the sacrifices to the latter were made to him in his capacity as savior from pestilence, it seems probable that the Pergamene sacrifice to Asclepius had the same meaning.⁶ When on the other hand it was feared that disease might befall the town, the citizens invoked the god with apotropaic prayers and sacrifices. In Rome, the simultaneous deaths of a praetor and a consul in one instance were interpreted as an indication of impending illness. The chief pontiff and the decemvirs, after due consultation of the sacred books, decided to vow gifts and gilded statues to the god. For two days supplications were held to secure the health of the city; processions went through the fora; all citizens over twelve years of age participated; they wore crowns and held laurel shoots in their hands (T. 505). And the god graciously listened to their humble petition; Rome was saved from disease.⁷

In addition, at decisive turns of the year the blessings of Asclepius were sought. In Titane, once every twelve months the god received a *Suovetaurilia*; during this service his mother's cult statue was taken to the temple of Athena; sacrificial animals were burnt on the ground, with the exception of birds which were burnt on the altar (T. 555). The whole ceremony seems to have been a rather old one, meant to celebrate the beginning of the year; it was dedicated to Asclepius, apparently with the wish of incurring the god's benevolence for the coming year.⁸ Sacred

⁶ Cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 174: "Vor allen anderen Göttern ist Apollo der Hekatombaos, derjenige, der die grössten und glänzendsten Opfer empfängt. . . . Die Ursache ist wohl die Auffassung von ihm als Sender und Abwehler von Seuchen und grossen Landplagen, der Schutz, den er gewährte, musste durch grosse Opfer erkaufte werden." The fact that T. 569 parallels the hecatombs offered at Delphi with those offered at Pergamum is in favor of the interpretation here proposed. Nilsson, *loc. cit.*, points out that sometimes the name hecatomb promised more than was actually given. Lucian's words seem to emphasize the magnitude of the Pergamene sacrifice. A. Bouché-Leclercq (*Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité*, III, 1880, p. 273) apparently assumes that it is Apollo who was approached in cases of pestilence, whereas Asclepius was restricted to individual healings; this is incorrect, cf. *e. g.* T. 451. Interestingly enough it is said in one passage that in great danger Apollo and Asclepius were invoked together (T. 586), a clear reminiscence of the original dependence of Asclepius on Apollo, cf. above, p. 99. Cf. also T. 460.

⁷ These processions were modelled after the Greek pattern (cf. W. Warde Fowler, *E. R. E.*, s. v. Roman Religion, X, p. 831); the Roman cult of Asclepius in general was practiced in the Greek fashion (T. 509). The Christian polemic of course knows only of supplications that remained unheeded, *e. g.* T. 585.

⁸ Cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, pp. 410 f., who equates the ceremonies held at Titane with the *Laphriae* and similar rites commemorated elsewhere. He says, *ibid.*, p. 54: "Alle diese 'Opfer' sind gleichartig und entsprechen den modernen Jahresfeuern. Der sogenannte Altar ist eigentlich ein Scheiterhaufen, oft als ein Gebäude ausgestattet, und wird mitsamt den Tieren ganz verbrannt." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 411: ". . . [in Titane] χαμαί, also auf einem direkt auf dem Erdboden aufgeschichteten Scheiterhaufen." For the *Suovetaurilia*, cf. L. Weber, *Philologus*, LXXXVII, 1932, pp. 409 ff. T. 553 also seems to attest sacrifices at the beginning of the year.

ablutions with clay were performed in Pergamum at the time of the spring equinox (T. 570). In late Roman centuries a vintage sacrifice was sacred to Asclepius (T. 574). On occasions such as these it was customary for people to say prayers for health to herald the grapes as a good remedy for future ills.⁹

Finally, there was one group that revered the giver of health daily as well as on special occasions: the physicians who saw in him the patron of their art. Many of them probably had a house cult of Asclepius, as had Nicias who every day honored with incense the Asclepius statue in his possession (T. 501).¹⁰ Then again, the physicians of a whole community, as those of Athens, sacrificed to the god twice a year in behalf of themselves and of those whom they had healed (T. 552). Among the devotees of Asclepius who zealously worshipped the dispenser of health his human colleagues were not the least noteworthy.¹¹

2. RITUAL FOR THE SICK

Great as Asclepius' power was in protecting man from diseases, it was in the dark hours of sickness that his might shone forth most clearly. None of the other deities knew as well as he did how to bring back from Hades' innermost shrine, how to restore to light and life, those who were in peril.

The simplest way of securing the god's succor was that of approaching him with prayers. Proclus, lying on his sickbed, implored Asclepius and

⁹ In earlier times, it was mainly Jupiter who was invoked as the god of vintage; cf. Wissowa, *Religion u. Kultus*, p. 115; F. Bömer, *Rhein. Mus.*, XL, 1941, pp. 30 ff. The attribution of the vintage festival to Asclepius is the more plausible as the *Meditrinalia*, the closing vintage rites, were sacred to Meditrina, a goddess of medicine, cf. Paulus *ex Festo*, p. 123, 16. Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, VI, 21, gives the formula recited: "novum vetus vinum bibo, novo veteri morbo medeor"; for the meaning of this prayer, cf. L. Deubner, *N. Jahrb.*, XXVII, 1911, p. 329, n. 5. The prayers offered at the Athenian *Pithoigia* were similar, and here the wine is directly called a remedy, cf. Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.*, III, 7, 1. It is not impossible that Greek vintage festivals too became associated with Asclepius. One must remember that wine, in Greek and Roman medicine, was considered one of the most important remedies, cf. T. C. Allbutt, *Greek Medicine in Rome*, 1921, pp. 329 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Wilamowitz' interpretation of this poem, *Die Textgesch. d. griech. Bukoliker*, *Phil. Unters.*, XVIII, 1906, p. 118; he is right in emphasizing the fact that Nicias paid tribute to Asclepius as the saint of doctors.

¹¹ T. 552 relates that the Athenian physicians of the third century B. C. sacrificed to Asclepius according to their ancestral custom. Does this imply that they revered Asclepius still as a hero? An Athenian inscription, enumerating the sacrifices which the priest of Asclepius performed, mentions *Heroa* (T. 553); maybe they were *Heroa* in honor of Asclepius. Finally, Arnobius tells (T. 103) that the Athenians sacrificed to Asclepius and Coronis among their dead. A hero worship on the part of the physicians would be quite understandable, cf. also below, pp. 191, n. 1; 193, n. 7.

besought his assistance; the god came and took away his disease (T. 446). Many a man must have had this experience: he prayed, and afterwards he felt relief; the god had helped. Or, if it was not the patient himself who addressed the god, it may have been a friend who, moved by the sorrows of the sick, sent a heartfelt cry to heaven: "I sadly fear that the disease has become more serious; to you, Asclepius, and you, Health, I pray that there may be none of this" (T. 578).¹ If the patient got better, the deity had performed a miracle. Sometimes it seemed safer to go to the temple of the god and to approach him there. Thus a father sent his son to the sanctuary to offer prayers and vows for his recovery (T. 538).² In other cases the patient's relatives asked those who were known as the favorites of the god to pray to him and to insure his assistance for the sufferer (T. 582). It was felt that the god would not reject the plea of his friends if they took upon themselves the office of mediation.

The content and form of the prayers differed. Some wearied the god with long and elaborate expositions, they importuned him with most piteous vows (T. 584). Probably they believed that Asclepius would more easily listen if they talked at great length and showed him their subservience. Proclus, however, made his address to the god in the true old fashion (T. 582), he prayed in the simple, noble way of the ancient Athenians.³ Many hoped that they might influence the god even through their posture while praying, and thought prostration before him more helpful than the upright position taken of old before the divine statue. Diogenes the Cynic, enraged at this blasphemy, dedicated to Asclepius a bruiser who, whenever the supplicants fell on their faces, would run up and beat them up (T. 580).⁴ On the other hand, the intimacy, the personal fervor of the entreaties is well indicated by the fact that the Romans prayed to Asclepius with their heads covered (T. 579), in the Roman fashion, although in general the rites of the Roman cult of Asclepius were borrowed from the Greek ritual.⁵

¹ T. 578 is taken from Terence who follows either Menander or Apollodorus; cf. M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Gesch. d. römischen Literatur*, I, 1927, p. 110.

² More sensible people were of the opinion that it was unnecessary to address the god in his temple. Asked to go there they answered that they were sure that Asclepius was not deaf and could hear their prayer wherever they happened to be (T. 577a). I should note that cities too offered prayers when disease gripped the town, cf. *e.g.* T. 585.

³ For the old form of prayers, cf. *e.g.* Marcus Aurelius, V, 7, and in general A. W. Mair, *E. R. E.*, s. v. Prayer, X, pp. 182 ff.; L. R. Farnell, *The Evolution of Religion*, 1905, pp. 163 ff.

⁴ Concerning the Greek attitude in prayer, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 301; P. Stengel, *Die griech. Kultusaltertümer*, 1920³, pp. 79 f.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 183, n. 7, and for the Roman praying rites, Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 462. It is true, Plautus generally changes the Greek original from which he copies, and

Whatever the attitude of the devout, the god expected from those who prayed to him the same sincerity that he demanded from those who came to his temple for the sake of incubations. When a barbarian prince once asked Apollonius to recommend him to Asclepius, the answer of the god's servant was: "You do not need any recommendation. If you care for good qualities, go boldly up to the god and tender what prayer you will" (T. 581).⁶

Yet, although Asclepius often gave help when merely invoked by the sick, it was in their temple dreams that he most effectively imparted his assistance. In order to receive healing dreams people came to the sanctuaries and lay down in the *abaton*. Before approaching the god, however, they had to perform certain rites which consisted of purifications of the body,⁷ and of sacrifices (T. 511). Every religious act, in antiquity, demanded offerings to the deity, and temple cures were considered religious ceremonies.

In the beginning, when Asclepius had not yet become a great god, all-powerful by himself, the sacrifice brought to him before the act of incubation was composed of an initial offering to other deities and a main one dedicated to Asclepius alone. In Tricca and Epidaurus, around 300 B. C., Apollo Maleatas was the god who received the primary gifts of the suppliant (T. 516). Still earlier, around 400 B. C., in the Piraeus it was Maleas, Apollo, Hermes, Iaso, Aceso, Panacea, the dogs and the huntsmen or dog-guardians who were given the first share (T. 515).⁸ Nothing is known about the kind of sacrifices made in Epidaurus or Tricca. In Athens, cakes were given to the deities who were invoked (T. 515).⁹ Generally speaking, it is permissible to assume that as time

introduces Roman names and features (for the *Curculio*, cf. F. Leo, *Gesch. d. römischen Literatur*, I, 1913, pp. 145 ff.). Yet that he could do so in this particular instance seems to warrant the conclusion that Asclepius' worshippers prayed to their god *more Romano*.

⁶ I fail to understand the interpretation of this passage given by R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 1927, p. 252, who quotes it in connection with the mystery of a *τεπὸς γάμος*. Even if in the scene recorded there were a reminiscence of such a mystic union, the important point is that the god, through the mouth of Apollonius, rejects such concepts.

⁷ Cf. above, p. 149.

⁸ For the importance of Apollo Maleatas, cf. above, pp. 99 ff.; for Iaso, Aceso, Panacea, cf. above, pp. 87 ff. Hermes, as Wilamowitz has pointed out (*Glaube*, II, p. 227), is probably mentioned here as the giver of sleep; cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, XXIV, 1 ff. For dogs and dog-guardians, cf. next note.

⁹ For a detailed interpretation of T. 515, cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 261 ff.; *Class. Quart.*, XIV, 1920, pp. 143 f.; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 226 f. The reference made in this ritual of the fourth century B. C. to sacrifices to hunters and dogs is somewhat puzzling. The hunters must be heroes, rather than living human beings; sacrifices to mortals, and of this profession, are unknown at that time, as Farnell has shown; cf. also F. R. Walton, *Harvard Studies*, XLVI, 1935, p. 184. H. Scholz (*Der Hund in d.*

went on such sacrifices to other gods grew obsolete, and that, when at the height of his power, Asclepius alone demanded the whole attention of his worshippers.¹⁰

The main offering to Asclepius, as performed in early centuries, again is attested only for Athens. Honey-cakes, cheese-cakes, bakemeats, and figs were laid upon the holy table of the god, as Aristophanes says (T. 514; 490). The sacrifices prescribed in other sanctuaries may have been similar, or they may have changed in the course of time—, at any rate, there is no indication that the initial offerings required much expense. This fact is well in accord with Asclepius' general attitude towards gifts. He was not one of those gods who enjoyed excessive luxury.¹¹ On the contrary, he was suspicious of expensive offerings, especially if they were made before the supplicant had received any favors from him. When a wealthy Cilician sacrificed on a very lavish scale immediately after his arrival at the temple and without ever having been helped by Asclepius on previous occasions, Apollonius at once recognized the man as one who wanted to beg himself off from the penalty of some horrible and cruel deed, and the god confirmed the correctness of his servant's judgment: he refused to help this man and bade him leave the sanctuary (T. 517).

After the preparatory steps were taken, the patients could enter the *abaton* and wait for the apparition of the god. If Asclepius decided in favor of treatment, religious ceremonies often formed an integral part of the cure prescribed. Just as the god chose the drugs and determined all other measures of natural therapy, he also designated the sacrifices to be made. Thus an inscription records in one breath that the god imposed upon his patient: "to take a walk in the upper portico, to take some passive exercise, to sprinkle myself with sand, to walk around barefoot, in the bathroom, before plunging into the hot water, to pour wine over myself, to bathe without help and to give an Attic drachma to the bath attendant, in common to offer sacrifice to Asclepius, Epione and the

griech.-röm. Magie u. Religion, Diss. Berl., 1937, p. 49, n. 47) maintains the opposite view without giving any reasons for his opinion. The dogs are most probably the sacred animals kept in the temple; sacrifices to animals were not unusual. A. Furtwängler (*S. B. München*, 1897, p. 406) believed that these dogs were demons; Wilamowitz, *loc. cit.*, seems to agree with him, yet such a view is hardly correct because no demons of this kind are ever mentioned. Wilamowitz also suggests that the whole ritual echoes ceremonies originally dedicated to the hero from whom Asclepius took over the sanctuary. This is quite possible.

¹⁰ Such a conclusion seems warranted by the development that took place in regard to the thank-offerings, cf. below, p. 188. Wherever the connection between Asclepius and Maleatas remained close throughout the centuries, as for instance in Epidaurus (cf. above, p. 99, n. 31), Maleatas may have continued to receive a share in the initial sacrifice.

¹¹ Cf. below, pp. 189 f.

Eleusinian goddesses, to take milk with honey" and several other things of a similar kind (T. 432). Even more marked and shocking is another combination that Aristides attests: "Thereupon purifications took place near the river by means of libations, and purifications at home by means of vomiting" (T. 518). In temple medicine sacrifices apparently were a matter of course, and great importance and healing power seem to have been attached to them.¹²

When the patient was healed immediately, or finally had regained his health, he was bound to offer a thanksgiving and to fulfill whatever vows he had made (T. 423, 5; 520). In early times, such a sacrifice again started out with the reverence paid to another god. In Erythrae at the beginning of the fourth century B. C. the person who wanted to sacrifice to Asclepius was expected first to march around the altar of Apollo three times and thrice to sing a paean in his honor (T. 521).¹³ Herondas in the middle of the third century, when describing in great detail a thanksgiving in the temple of Cos (T. 482), no longer mentions Apollo. It was only Asclepius who now received all the remuneration for having aided his worshipper.¹⁴ At the altar in the prophylaeum, where many divine statues were set up, the suppliants said a prayer of gratitude to the god (T. 482, *vv.* 1-18). Then the sacrificial animal was given to the sexton (*v.* 41).¹⁵ It was for him to decide whether the offer was acceptable to the god, and, if so, he addressed him in another solemn prayer (*vv.* 79-85). After this, the priest received his share in the offering; a portion was put into the mouth of the snake as a small tribute to the sacred animal (*v.* 91).¹⁶ Part of the dedicated cake was taken home and eaten

¹² The belief that such ceremonies would contribute towards recovery is on the same level with that in the greater efficacy of drugs taken near the sacred tripod (T. 411) or lamp (T. 411a).

¹³ Cf. Wilamowitz, "Nordionische Steine," *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1909, pp. 37 ff.; Wunsch, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Hymnos, IX, p. 169, 12. The rules preserved concern any kind of sacrifice, whether offered after a healing through a dream or through a prayer.

¹⁴ For a detailed interpretation of the Herondas passage, cf. R. Wunsch, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, V, 1904, pp. 95 ff.; cf. also S. Kalinka, *S. B. Wien*, CXCVII, no. 6, 1922, pp. 3 ff. The document is most important for ancient cult rites in general; cf. L. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Hiereis, VIII, p. 1422, 67: "wohl typisch für das gewöhnliche Privatopfer." Whether the sacrifice was made after a healing through dream vision or prayer, cannot be ascertained. The god seems to have performed an immediate cure, cf. T. 482, *vv.* 17 ff.: "paying the price of cure from disease that thou didst wipe away, Lord, by laying on us thy gentle hands."

¹⁵ The sacristan here acts in place of the priest, cf. below, p. 192.

¹⁶ That the "offering to the snake" means a payment of money into a box on which an ornamental serpent was seated has been suggested by Herzog, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, X, 1907, pp. 205 ff.; such tills have been excavated. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 257, speaks of *pelanoi* or money given to a serpent "who enjoyed an underground treasure chamber"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 262.

there. Last but not least, the worshippers took with them even some holy bread as a means of averting evil (*vv.* 93-95).¹⁷

This, it seems, was the general form of thank-offering prevailing in the Asclepius cult from Herondas' time down to the end of antiquity. To be sure, the details varied.¹⁸ While in Cos the worshipper was permitted to take home his share in the god's meal (T. 482), in Epidaurus and Titane (T. 510), as well as at Athens (T. 510a), he had to consume his part within the precincts of the temple.¹⁹ But everywhere, it seems, the devout feasted with the god. In the Asclepius cult the ancient concept of the sacrifice as a communion between god and man was upheld tenaciously.²⁰ Concerning the sacrificial animals there also were variations. In Cyrene goats could be offered (T. 532), in Epidaurus (T. 532) and Tithorea (T. 533) they were tabooed.²¹ Generally speaking, however, all animals which the ancients were wont to give to their deities could also be offered to Asclepius.²² The god evidently had few predilections.

Only in one respect did he show an extraordinary attitude: he was satisfied with small dedications. The Coan women who sacrificed a cock to him apologized for the cheapness of their offering; they were aware of

¹⁷ Cf. Wünsch, *loc. cit.*, pp. 115 f.; his interpretation remains valid whether one attributes lines 93 ff. with Wünsch and Herzog to Cynno, or with Knox to the priest. Cf. also T. 503, where Libanius speaks of branches which were supposed to have an apotropaic effect; in general, cf. above, pp. 182 f.

¹⁸ In late Rome it was customary to give thanks before the assembled people (T. 438).

¹⁹ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 242, and Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, pp. 122 f., mention a *holokautesis* in honor of Asclepius, and Latte, *loc. cit.*, has explained this sacrifice as significant for the chthonian character of Asclepius. Apart from the fact that a burnt sacrifice does not prove a chthonian cult (cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 428, n. 2; Farnell, *loc. cit.*; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 242), the inscription referred to (*I. G.*, IV², 1, no. 97) says only *θεῶ* (l. 23; 26). There is no certainty, then, that this ritual really concerns Asclepius; many other gods were revered in his temple.

²⁰ Cf. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, XVIII, p. 622, 19 ff.; Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, pp. 74 f.

²¹ Goat sacrifices were not very common in Greek cults, excepting that of Artemis; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 290; Farnell, *Cults*, II, p. 449. Servius' explanation of the preference for goats (T. 535) seems fanciful; at any rate, it could equally well be used for an argument in favor of the rejection of goats: the god of health could not accept animals who are never free of fever. Or maybe in Epidaurus goats were forbidden, because in the opinion of the Epidaurians a goat had nursed the babe Asclepius (T. 7), unless this story itself is an explanation of the rule by which goat sacrifices were excluded. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 242, says: "If this rule [*sc.* of tabooing goats] were aboriginal and universal, it would certainly strengthen our belief in his [*sc.* Asclepius'] original human-heroic nature." Yet the rule was not universal, though it seems to have been more common to refrain from goat sacrifices, cf. T. 534.

²² For the animals usually sacrificed, cf. *e.g.* T. 536; in general, cf. Ziehen, *op. cit.*, p. 590, 36 ff. If he says (*ibid.*, p. 594, 49) that for the Asclepius cult male sacrificial animals alone seem to be attested, this is in contradiction with T. 691, where *gallinae* are mentioned; cf. also T. 535.

the fact that other clients would perhaps have offered an ox or a pig (T. 482, v. 15). Yet, the sacristan assured them that nobody could give to Asclepius a gift which would be more welcome to him (vv. 80-81). The cock was indeed the most common sacrifice; the phrase "a cock to Asclepius" was almost proverbial, not only on account of Socrates' offering.²³ The divine physician seems to have agreed with Hesiod's demand that everybody should give to the gods as much as was in his power,²⁴ and no more; in the case of the poor this meant a little; in the case of the rich of course it meant much. For if they gave on a small scale, they deprived the deity of the share that was rightly his.

Finally it should be mentioned that thank-offerings to Asclepius did not necessarily consist of animal sacrifices or of these alone. People in exchange for the fulfillment of their wishes could give and actually gave almost anything: money, frankincense, laurel, olive shoots, oak leaves, garlands, songs, branches, chaplets, pictures on which Asclepius was painted as well-doer (T. 539),²⁵ or brass rings (T. 542), candles (T. 544), offerings in gold and silver (T. 545; 484). Some patients even dedicated their sandals to the god; they had made a long trip in order to visit him, and thus it seemed fitting that they should give him their shoes.²⁶ Whatever it was, the god received it graciously: "The gods . . . do not strive after human goods. Wealth is not gratifying to them, nor any other gain. They are interested in beneficence alone. In this the gods find their riches" (T. 538). So the ancient sceptic himself said before he was asked to render his due to Asclepius.

²³ Cf. T. 523; 539 and 562 (for *καλαῖς*, cf. E. Fraenkel, *Glotta*, IV, 1913, pp. 33 f.). It has sometimes been doubted that cocks were used as a "Speiseopfer"; but the Herondas passage proves that this doubt is not warranted; cf. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, XVIII, p. 590, 65 ff. In other worships the sacrifice of a cock is rarely attested, perhaps on account of the fact that the cock was brought to Greece only in post-Homeric centuries, cf. V. Hehn, "Homer," *Die Antike*, III, 1927, p. 74. Although it follows from Herondas and from other passages (e.g. T. 539) that the supplicants of Asclepius favored the cock sacrifice because it was cheap, it may also have been of importance that the cock was the herald of dawn—Asclepius was the god who allowed men to see the light of day. Or the belief that the cock was an apotropaeic bird may have contributed to the popularity of the sacrifice. Certainly the worshippers did not consider the cock a bird dedicated to chthonian deities, for in the cult of Eleusis the cock was tabooed, cf. Porphyry, *De abstinentia*, iv, 16, and for the significance of the cock in general, *E. R. E.*, III, pp. 694 ff.

²⁴ Hesiod, *Opera*, 336. It is perhaps not by chance that Aristides refers to this passage in his speech on Asclepius (T. 317, 2).

²⁵ For such pictures, cf. below, p. 215. Incidentally, a special kind of garland seems to have been sacred to Asclepius (T. 835; cf. also 543).

²⁶ Cf. W. Amelung, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, VIII, 1905, pp. 157 ff. (according to a monument). Mention should be made at least of those offerings which were made to Asclepius for help bestowed upon men in other than medical instances, cf. T. 546 ff.

3. TEMPLE SERVICE

Those who sought preservation of health and those who sought liberation from diseases tried to solicit Asclepius' help in their own individual concerns. The regular worship, however, which the devotees paid to their god was of a more disinterested nature; it was the god's unquestioned due, regardless of his beneficence. This ceremonial centered around the temple. When Asclepius rose to power, the Greek deities had long ceased to dwell outdoors and had taken up their residence in the magnificent palaces that men had built for them. It is true, a cave sacred to Asclepius is mentioned (T. 755), and so is an altar established in the open air (T. 757). But other deities, too, occasionally found worship at such places even in late centuries. Generally speaking, all ceremonies in honor of Asclepius were held within the precincts of the sacred temple.¹

In ground plan and construction the Asclepius sanctuaries seem not to have differed from those of other divinities, with the exception of two features: the Asclepieia had buildings attached to them which were intended to house the patients and to provide the necessary means for their treatment; besides, there was a hall in which the patients slept. It was called *abaton* (T. 423, 2) or *adyton* (T. 516), names customarily given to the most sacred part of the temple; in the Asclepieia naturally this was the place of incubation, since it was here that the god made his appearance.² But apart from these features which resulted from the specific

¹ The fact remains, however, that in many places the worship of Asclepius originally was performed at an altar erected in the temple of Apollo. This was true of Epidaurus, for instance (cf. above, p. 99, n. 32), and of Cos (cf. *Kos*, ed. R. Herzog, I, *Asklepieion*, ed. P. Schazman, 1932, p. 72). Note that those sanctuaries which are referred to in the testimonies were dedicated to the god Asclepius; of the hero no shrines are attested. It is true, Aelian (T. 730) after having spoken in general terms of the respect of the Athenians for *heroa*, relates a story that refers to an Asclepius sanctuary. From this statement one can hardly conclude with certainty that a *heroon* of Asclepius existed in Athens; Aelian tells a number of stories illustrating the religious attitude of the Athenians in general. If his report is to be taken literally, one probably ought to connect this sanctuary with the worship of the Athenian physicians, cf. above, p. 184, n. 11.

² Cf. Pfister, Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Kultus, XI, pp. 2140, 36 ff. It should be remembered, however, that in some places the incubants slept in the temple proper; cf. above, p. 150, n. 20. In Tricca, according to Isyllus (T. 516), Asclepius had a nether *adyton*. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 239, thinks that "this subterranean structure may have prevailed elsewhere, accounting for the rise of a legend that such and such communities [Cynosura, Epidaurus, cf. above, p. 50] possessed the tomb of Asklepios." Whether his assumption is correct remains uncertain. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 159, n. 34, believes that Isyllus' words are indicative of an "ansteigende Örtlichkeit"; yet *καταβαλεῖν εἰς ἄδυτον* is the technical term for the descent into a nether sanctuary; cf. e.g. Pausanias, II, 2, 1. On the other hand, such a subterranean structure is not a chthonian feature (contrary to Farnell, *loc. cit.*). For nether *adyta* are known from many temples, even from that of Athena, cf. Pausanias, VII, 27, 2, and Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. Adytum. If a special significance can be attached at all to this underground part of the temple, it may be

character of the Asclepius religion the shrines were built according to the usual pattern, just as they enjoyed all the prerogatives commonly attached to holy places: whatever fell to the ground belonged to the god (T. 487); whoever took refuge in the temple was protected by the right of asylum against any persecution (T. 798).³

In these sanctuaries the god was honored with regular sacrifices. Their performance rested in the hands of the priests (cf. *e. g.* T. 494). It constituted in fact their main task, aside from the offering of special sacrifices made at a given time, either by individuals or by the city.⁴ When executing their holy functions the priests usually were clad in white—in Pergamum they wore a purple robe (T. 492a) and Egyptian shoes, as Aristides says (T. 493)—, their hair was bound with a white fillet (T. 850, *v.* 676).⁵ They were assisted by a sacristan. Great sanctuaries like that of Pergamum had even two sextons (T. 495), or the sacristan had

characteristic of Asclepius as an accessory of Apollo (cf. above, p. 99), for other minor deities also had nether *adyta*, *e. g.* Erechtheus (cf. Rhode, *Psyche*, I, p. 136), or Palaemon (cf. Pausanias, II, 2, 1).

³ The various sanctuaries probably had sacred laws of their own (cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 170; cf. also R. Herzog, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos*, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1928, no. 6). In Epidaurus, birth and death could not take place within the temple limits (T. 488).

⁴ For the participation of the sacristan in private sacrifices, cf. above, p. 188. Besides, the priests had other obligations: they supervised the buildings as well as the minor officials (T. 491). They administered the money offered to the god (in Epidaurus special officials, the *Hieromnemones* [T. 562], four in number, seem to have been in charge of the treasury, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, VIII, p. 1491, 39 ff.). The priests probably also kept an account of the other presents (T. 489) and took charge of the sale of offerings which became necessary from time to time, or of the removal of less valuable ones when space was lacking. Finally, they were responsible for the purification of the sanctuary which took place at stated intervals, a ceremony that attracted many people. In white garments they stood in the gateway during the performance of the holy ritual (T. 486). Concerning the duties of the priests in general, cf. L. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* *Hiereis*, VIII, p. 1420, 57 ff.

⁵ For the garments of priests in general, cf. Stengel, *Kultusaltertümer*, p. 47. The attire of the priests of Asclepius is described in more detail in T. 492. From T. 687 it seems to follow that in some places they wore Greek sandals. To add a few details concerning the election and remuneration of the priests: they were elected by the people, chosen by lot, or they would inherit, or even buy their office (T. 491 b-e). In short, all the procedures common in the installation of such officials were employed also in the Asclepius cult. Cf. L. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* *Hiereis*, VIII, pp. 1413, 12 ff.; cf. also *E. R. E.*, X, pp. 305-306. In Pergamum, where the priesthood was hereditary, even women officiated as priests; cf. O. Deubner, *Das Asklepieion von Pergamon*, 1938, p. 11. For the chronology of the Athenian priests, cf. W. S. Ferguson, *The Priests of Asklepios*, *Univ. of Cal. Publications in Class. Phil.*, I, 1906, pp. 131 ff.; W. K. Pritchett and B. D. Meritt, *The Chronology of Hellenistic Athens*, 1940, pp. 74 ff. The remuneration which the priest received consisted mainly of a share in the sacrifices (T. 490). Wherever his office lasted only one year, he probably found himself adequately rewarded by the honor of his position. When in office for life, he may have received a salary. During his tenure the priest had certain public prerogatives. In Pergamum (T. 491) and in Athens (T. 491a) a special seat was reserved for him in the theater. After he had served his term and had given a satisfactory report to the authorities, public thanks and honorary inscriptions were decreed for him (T. 494).

subordinates who may also have officiated in the ceremonies.⁶ As for the sacrifices made, it suffices to point out that there is no indication of a chthonian ritual. While offerings to the chthonian deities were received by pits, those made to Asclepius were placed upon altars.⁷ Finally, it should be remembered that the word spoken was no less agreeable to the deity than was the gift presented. Nay, prayer rather than sacrifice formed the climax of the ritual. Hymns were sung and the temple resounded with the sacred responses, the "Hail" (T. 598), or "Hail Paean" (T. 592), or "Great is Asclepius" (T. 602).⁸

While it remains uncertain how often such regular observances were held in early times, whether monthly or twice a month or more rarely, in late centuries daily temple services seem to have been customary. At that time Asclepius, at least twice every day, in the morning and at dusk, received the veneration of the pious. Special morning songs are attested for Epidaurus (T. 598; cf. T. 466); Aristides, in reference to the Pergamene temple, alludes to its being opened again at night (T. 485).⁹

⁶ Concerning the office of the sacristan (*νεωκόρος*), cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XVI, pp. 2422 ff. The procedure of his selection is not known; in Asia Minor, at least in late centuries, it was an honorary title (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, p. 2423, 66). In Athens, the sacristan was called *ῥάκορος* (T. 500); his assistant was the *ὑποῤακορεύων* (T. 498a). For the participation of the sacristan in sacrifices, cf. above, p. 188. For Eretria special *hieropoioi* are attested (T. 787), cf. Pauly-Wissowa, VIII, p. 1585, 60.

⁷ The altar is usually called *βωμός* (T. 483), sometimes also *τρίβωμος* (T. 438). Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, p. 43, understands the latter as "triangular in shape," but altars of such form are otherwise unknown (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Altar, I, p. 1677, 20). Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus*, p. 308, n. 7, explains *τρίβωμος* as an altar dedicated to three gods, Apollo, Asclepius, Hygieia. Offering tables have been excavated at Cos; cf. R. Herzog, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, X, 1907, p. 204. One of the Asclepius monuments probably shows an *ἑσχάρα* (cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 240); *ἑσχάρα* and *βωμός* are to be found in chthonian and Olympian cults alike (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.*, p. 1664, 45 ff.; Wide, *op. cit.*, p. 233). The excavations of the Athenian temple have unearthed a pit within the sanctuary of Asclepius (cf. U. Köhler, *Ath. Mitt.*, II, 1877, p. 254). This does not necessarily mean that chthonian sacrifices were dedicated to Asclepius, they may have been given to other deities, as was the case in Pergamum (T. 504). Köhler thinks that the pit was used in connection with the *Heroa*, a sacrifice for the dead. But cf. above, p. 184, n. 11. The *ἑμφαλός* which appears on some of the Athenian reliefs (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.*, p. 1665, 25 ff.) denotes Asclepius as a hero. It seems that in Athens traces of a hero cult survived.

⁸ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 301, characterizes the ancient cult ceremonial thus: "Freilich das Wort kam zu kurz, auch wenn Gebetsformeln, einzeln auch Litaneien, und die rituellen Rufe der Gemeinde . . . (hinzu)traten." This statement does not seem justified. For the connection between prayers and sacrifices, cf. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, XVIII, p. 604, 47 ff. For the *ἕμνος παραβώμιος*, cf. Plato, *Laws*, VII, 800 C-D, and in general, Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. d. griech. Literatur*, I, 1, p. 340.

⁹ There was a special officer, called the *κλειδοῦχος* (T. 498, n. 1); cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XI, p. 595, 38 ff. Sometimes the sacristan was in charge of the keys of the shrine (T. 485). Herondas mentions the opening of the *cella* in the morning (T. 482, *vv.* 55 f.); for the rules in regard to the closing of the *cella* in various cults, cf. Wide, *op. cit.*, p. 234. But it should be stressed that people could come to the sanctuary whenever they

Whereof these ordinary services consisted is not known in detail. One may, however, venture to say that everything was regulated minutely. Different hymns were recited at different hours. In many cases they were certainly sung by the congregation, but regular choirs also existed, sometimes perhaps made up of slaves.¹⁰ In addition to singing, offerings were made. In view of the fact that they were presented so often, it is likely that they commonly consisted of libations and frankincense rather than of animal sacrifices.¹¹ Finally, at night, illuminations played an important part. Aristides speaks of the evening service as the time when the sacred lights are kindled (T. 485). Asclepius it seems was fond of candles.¹²

The average number of people who attended the regular observances, and especially the daily ceremonies, is hard to guess. In the great cult centers, in Epidaurus, Cos, or Pergamum the temple must have been crowded with the devout; Herondas mentions the rush of people in the early morning hours (T. 482, *v.* 54). In small towns or villages, the priest and the choir may have found themselves in the company of a small congregation, comprising mainly old men and women. Yet, it seems permissible to surmise that in the routine of daily life Asclepius was less likely to be forgotten than many another deity. The preoccupation of the ancients with their bodily well-being, their fear of disease which they felt to be a constant threat, must have caused them to be particularly strict in their adherence to the god of medicine.¹³

liked to offer prayer or sacrifice; for there were statues and altars in the propylaeum (T. 482) which could be approached at any time.

¹⁰ For hymns destined to be sung at the first and the third hour, cf. Maas, *Epidaurische Hymnen*, p. 160, 3; 16. For an interpretation of divine poetry, cf. below, pp. 199 ff. Choirs are mentioned *e. g.* in T. 561; 562. With the requirement of so much singing, the temples must have found it necessary to hire a choir, and I think it permissible to assume that the slaves owned by the temples (*e. g.* T. 491, 26; cf. O. Kern, *Hermes*, XLVI, 1911, p. 302) were used for this task also, in addition to their duty to perform all the heavy manual labor, such as cleaning the temple, or to perform the many odd jobs to be done in institutions where patients were taken care of, such as attendance in the bathhouse (T. 432).

¹¹ Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, pp. 133 f., has tried to reconstruct the daily ritual of the Asclepius temple in Epidaurus according to *I. G.*, IV², 1, no. 742. But Latte himself calls the document a "hoffnungslos verstümmelten Rest eines späten Kultrituals," and he admits that it is uncertain, whether the inscription in every detail really refers to Asclepius. For this reason I have not made use of this testimony. But from Latte I have borrowed the suggestion that bloodless sacrifices were the rule in these ceremonies. I should mention that daily services are attested already on an inscription of the second century B. C. (T. 553).

¹² For the *λυχναια*, cf. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, p. 133. There were also sacred lamps (T. 411a); in regard to them, cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 345, n. 5; S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer*, 1915, pp. 152 f. In this connection the office of the fire bearer (T. 423, 5) should also be mentioned. Smoking censers are referred to in T. 432.

¹³ This book was already in print when an article was published by M. P. Nilsson on "Divine Service in Late Antiquity," *The Harvard Theological Review*, XXXVIII, 1945, pp. 63 ff. Nilsson outlines the history of the daily ceremonies and shows that they

4. FESTIVALS

In addition to the regular services, Asclepius, like all the other gods, was worshipped with celebrations that recurred at certain intervals. To these festivals, at least to the more important ones, people came from far and near, often in troupes of pilgrims (T. 402).¹ Pergamum was one of the places "where they all run" to celebrate feast days (T. 569). Such observances were a treat for men no less than for the deity; they were intended to be not only religious ceremonies but also popular entertainments.

The names of the festivals and their dates varied a good deal. Many were called *Asclepieia* (e. g. T. 575);² but at Athens it was the *Epidauria* that were sacred to Asclepius (T. 564). Some of the ceremonies had no special designation and were distinguished from those devoted to other deities simply by the addition of Asclepius' name. A procession of Asclepius (T. 568) and a night festival of Asclepius (T. 553) are mentioned. As regards the time of year at which the various fêtes took place and as regards their frequency, sometimes they fell in the spring (T. 570), sometimes in the fall (T. 565); one city had an annual festival (T. 554), another commemorated the god twice a year (T. 572). As far as the day was concerned, the 8th seems to have enjoyed a certain preference. At least in Athens, Asclepius was honored on the 8th (T. 566) and on the 18th (T. 565), that is the 8th of the second decade of the month. This custom may also have prevailed elsewhere.³

deeply influenced the formation of the Christian service, that the pagan reverence of old, which accentuated the sacrifice of animals, gradually was replaced by a more spiritual worship in which songs and bloodless offerings became increasingly popular. Nilsson also stresses the importance which the cult of Asclepius assumed in this development (p. 67). For other details of the Asclepius worship reminiscent of the Christian service, cf. below, p. 206, n. 28. Incidentally Nilsson states (p. 64) that the epigram of Theocritus (T. 501, cf. above, p. 184) is one of the earliest testimonies mentioning a daily house cult.

¹ For pilgrimages, cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Jahrb. d. Dtsch. Arch. Inst.*, XXXI, 1916, p. 310. A *thlaos* of patients is mentioned on one of the inscriptions of Lebea, cf. M. Guarducci, *Inscriptiones Creticae*, I, 1935, XVII, 11, 6.

² Festivals with the name *Asclepieia*, as far as they were known from inscriptions found before 1896, are collected in Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1683. Since then, considerable new material has been found; yet, it is not my intention to investigate the regional extension of the cult.

³ For the date of the Athenian *Epidauria*, cf. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, p. 72. The belief that the 8th day had a special significance for Asclepius rests mainly on the testimony concerning Athens referred to above, and on that concerning Pergamum. Here, certain ceremonies in honor of the priest of Asclepius were held on the 8th. In Elaea the people staged a procession to the Asclepius temple and sacrificed to the god and to Attalus on the 8th, cf. W. Schmidt, *Geburtstag im Altertum*, *R. G. V. V.*, VII, 1, 1908, p. 104; O. Deubner, *op. cit.*, p. 18. Schmidt, *loc. cit.*, therefore calls the 8th day the birthday of the god. Such a "birthday" in ancient terminology was either the day of the first

At such occasions the worshippers used to meet in the center of the city, and, raising the paeon in honor of the god, they went in procession from there to the temple which often was situated at the outskirts of the town. In later centuries it was customary for the pious to carry the statue of the deity with them.⁴ In Athens the procession was supervised by the archon (T. 567); in other places other officials were in charge of it. In some cases, it seems, everybody took part in these parades, men and women, and small children, even those under seven years (T. 787).⁵ In Epidaurus, the communities which were on friendly terms with the host city had the right to send legations which in an official capacity participated in the pageant, a cause of pride to the smaller neighboring towns. The animals which they intended to sacrifice were taken along with those dedicated by the city of Epidaurus (T. 563). On special occasions, however, the procession was limited to certain groups of citizens, men selected from each tribe, the best of the city; they appeared in white garments and with flowing hair, holding in their hands garlands of laurel for Apollo and branches of olive for Asclepius (T. 296).⁶ Or the procession had to be formed by young people, carrying in their hands suppliant boughs, bright offshoots of the olive (T. 593). In Cos, at the yearly festive assembly of the national god, the "children of Asclepius," the physicians, staged a very costly procession of their own (T. 568).⁷

epiphany of the deity, or the day of his main festival, chosen for some unknown reason and later understood as the birthday of the god. But considering the variety of ancient cult rites, it is not certain that what was true of Athens and Pergamum also applied to other temples. In Rome, the 11th of September (T. 855a) and the 1st of January (T. 855) were celebrated as *dies natalis* of Asclepius. These days, however, mark the respective foundings of the two Roman Asclepieia, dates which the Romans generally considered the "birthday" of a god, cf. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 116 ff. and 124.

⁴ For processions in general, cf. Nilsson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 311 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 168 f.; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 350 ff. Processions were very popular. They could also be held as independent ceremonies. For the carrying of the divine statues in processions, cf. Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 317; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 351. Only one testimony mentions a statue of Asclepius together with those of other gods in a Roman procession (T. 258). For the paeon, cf. below, pp. 199 ff.

⁵ Their names were included in the records of the festival. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 412, thinks it probable that this custom was connected with the cult of the babe Asclepius; cf. above, p. 71, n. 14, and below, p. 224.

⁶ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 410, believes that the procession, for which Isyllus wrote his paeon, formed part of the annual festival in honor of Asclepius. But it seems to me that the specific purpose of Isyllus, as outlined by Wilamowitz (*Isyllos*, pp. 38 ff.), intimates that this was an independent ceremony, not integrated into the main festival; cf. also below, p. 201. Other processions, such as that of the *ephebi* at Cos, are discussed by Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

⁷ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 411, rightly claims that the phrase ἦν ἔθος ἀνάγειν τοῖς τῷ θεῷ προσήκουσιν presupposes "dass das Asklepiadengeschlecht beim Fest eine besondere Rolle spielte." The Coan physicians certainly had an old-established worship of Asclepius even before the great temple was founded (cf. below, p. 243) and the god became the main

When the worshippers had arrived at the temple, sacrifices were offered to Asclepius. The god himself was believed to come and take part in the celebration. From time immemorial the deity, in the opinion of the faithful, feasted with them. In early centuries his presence was taken for granted, no symbolic representation of the divinity was needed; later, it became more and more customary to set up a couch and to place upon it a puppet embodying the god. In Athens, Asclepius was honored in such a way relatively early (T. 553), and *lectisternia* for Asclepius are attested also for other temples (T. 719).⁸ The offerings differed in the different centuries and at different places. Epidaurus, at the annual festival of its saint, celebrated him together with the other gods and goddesses who shared his temple (T. 562).⁹ Asclepius and the male deities received a bull, the female deities were given a cow. In addition, Asclepius was honored with a cock, with barley, wheat and wine. What sacrifices were offered in Cos and Pergamum, the other famous seats of Asclepius, is not known.¹⁰

While processions and sacrifices formed the main content of the celebrations held during the daytime, those which took place during the night were characterized by other and no less spectacular solemnities. Nights holy to Asclepius were probably observed in Pergamum (T. 571),¹¹ they are unambiguously attested for Athens (T. 553). During the nightly vigils people went out into the streets. They indulged in merriment. For such nights, fraught as they were with religious emotion, were

deity of the city. Their custom (*ἔθος*) of celebrating Asclepius is here referred to, just as it is said of the sacrifice of the Athenian physicians that it was customary (*πάτριον*, T. 552).

⁸ Concerning the *lectisternia*, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XII, pp. 1108 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 178; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 350 ff., has stressed their relatively late attestation by Greek inscriptions. The Athenian inscription concerning Asclepius goes back to the second century B. C.; Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 118, suggests that the festival was adopted from the Eleusinian ritual. Wissowa, *Religion u. Kultus*, pp. 421 ff., claims that in Italy *lectisternia* were especially favored in those cults that were taken over from Crece and performed in the Greek fashion. Asclepius, then, should have received many such celebrations.

⁹ Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 409, understands T. 562 as referring to an annual festival. T. 561 specifies the sacrifice to Apollo, made apparently on the same occasion.

¹⁰ For Cos, cf. R. Herzog, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos*, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1928, no. 6, pp. 39 ff.; the inscriptions preserved are too badly mutilated to be considered here. One of the Coan festivals was called *τῆς ῥάβδου ἡ ἀνάληψις* (T. 568); according to Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 411, this ceremony was connected with the taking over of the sacred rod by the new priest of Asclepius. Nilsson also suggests that this festival was a "Vorgänger der grossen Asklepieien." For Pergamum, the new excavations may bring some more material; cf. the preliminary report of Th. Wiegand, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1932, no. 5.

¹¹ Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1643, 48, has drawn attention to this testimony; but it cannot be decided with certainty whether *θεός*, as is usual with Aristides, refers to Asclepius, or whether it refers to Poseidon whom he has just mentioned.

also devoted to gaiety. Even Aristides, in spite of his melancholic and morose disposition that made him stay at home, felt obliged to pass that night amusing himself (T. 571). The Athenian festival may have been connected with a torchlight race.¹² If so, it provided a fascinating spectacle that could not fail to attract people. How great the contrast between these nightly sights, these merry crowds, and the nightly temple sleep of the sick to whom the god revealed himself.¹³

What the Asclepius festivals meant in the life of the city, it is rather difficult to ascertain in general terms. For there were no uniform regulations in regard to the participants in the ceremonies or to the Sunday-rest, if one may use that expression. In Lampsacus (T. 572), where the cost of the sacrifices was defrayed by the temple treasury, all business ceased when twice a year, in the months of *Lenaion* and *Leucathion*, the *Asclepieia* were staged. Children had a day off at school; slaves were granted a day of rest.¹⁴ In Athens, at the celebrations in the *Elaphebolion*, no political assemblies were held. Demosthenes did an unheard-of thing when he brought in a decree that the prytanes call a meeting of the citizens for that day (T. 566).¹⁵ In the beginning of Asclepius' reign the extent to which his holidays were observed by the cities, apart from

¹² The connection suggested here between *Pannychis* and *Lampadophoria* is based on Plato, *Republic*, 328 A. For the latter ceremony, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* *Lampadedromia*, XII, pp. 569 ff.; its aim was to take fire from one altar, on which it was burning, to another, on which it was to be started, or more generally to light the fire on certain altars. It is interesting that in Athens this rite originally was restricted to Prometheus, Hephaestus, and Athena, the deities of artists and craftsmen (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.*, pp. 576 f.); the fire was taken from the Prometheus sanctuary. *Lampadophoriae* are attested only for Paros (T. 547a); *ibid.*, p. 570, 46. The ceremony may, of course, have taken place in many of the *Asclepieia*. Alexander the Great staged a *Lampadophoria* for the god (T. 547). The rite seems to have gone out of fashion later on; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 353. For the general importance of lights in the Asclepius cult, cf. above, p. 194.

¹³ Kern, *Religion*, I, pp. 167 f., is the only one to have mentioned the general importance of the night for the Asclepius cult. With the exception of the mystery religions or the veneration of certain demons, the day was the main time of worship.

¹⁴ The consideration shown here for children seems characteristic of the Asclepius festivals, cf. also T. 787.

¹⁵ On the day of the *Epidauria* (T. 564), however, assemblies took place; Deubner, *Attische Feste*, pp. 72 f., explains this fact by the relatively small importance of this festival which was of rather late date. The *Epidauria* actually were a mystery rite rather than an Asclepius festival. The god supposedly had come to Athens on that day, and for this reason it was an important date for him as well as for the city. But the ceremonies performed in his honor served as introductory rites to the Great Mysteries, and they were much shorter than the rites preliminary to initiation had been in former times. Hence the legend arose that the Athenians initiated Asclepius, although he had arrived late for the mysteries (T. 565); for an interpretation of this testimony, cf. A. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen*, 1898, pp. 216 ff.; 219 ff. The text of T. 564 has been analyzed by Kern, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* *Epidauria*, VI, p. 45, 25 ff.; for the date of the festival, cf. above, n. 3. For Asclepius as a *mystes*, cf. above, pp. 127 ff.

the ones that revered him as their principal deity, must have been relatively small. The more he gained in power, the more he became acknowledged as one of the foremost protectors of man, the greater must have been the citizen's concern with the festivals held in his honor.

5. HYMNS AND SERMONS

In all the ceremonies, be they daily exercises or solemn festivals, one feature recurs: the singing of hymns. They were recited in the temples morning and night; they were chanted during processions; they were accompaniment for sacrifices. The song characteristic of the Asclepius worship was the paean, a choral hymn with no music other than that of the cithara. Originally the paean had been sacred to Apollo; the fact that later it was connected especially with Asclepius indicates that in the belief of the people the son had usurped the place of the father in matters pertaining to medicine.¹ Although only a few of the hymns dedicated to Asclepius are still extant, one can evaluate, at least in broad outline, the characteristics of this divine poetry which finally came to include the composition of prose hymns, no less stately and elaborate than those written in verse. Of course, it is only the words of the songs that can still convey a message to the modern interpreter. The music is lost, and yet, for the Greeks, the tunes may have meant even more than the words. For as Plato says, more than anything else do rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace if they are rightly chosen, or the contrary if they are chosen badly.²

The most famous of all Asclepius hymns and the oldest known is the one composed by Sophocles (T. 587).³ The words that are still legible on the stone on which it is preserved are too few to convey an adequate impression of its religious fervor or artistic quality. The ancients' appreciation of the song is fairly expressed by the statement that the god himself had urged the poet "to write a paean and though 'famed for his skill' he does not disdain to hear it from you" (T. 590). Sophocles,

¹ In general, cf. A. Fairbanks, *A Study of the Greek Paean*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, XII, 1900, especially pp. 66 f.; Th. Reinach in Daremberg-Saglio, s. v. Paean, IV, pp. 265 ff. In later times, cithara and flutes were used as instruments.

² I am paraphrasing Plato's statement, *Republic*, III, 401 D. For the Greek concept of music, cf. E. Frank, *Plato und die sogenannten Pythagoreer*, 1923, pp. 1 ff., and for music in its relation to religious services, cf. G. Méautis, *Aspects ignorés de la religion grecque*, 1925.

³ For the Homeric hymn (T. 31) which was also composed at the end of the fifth century B. C., cf. below, p. 210.

apparently in the dactylic metre, addresses Coronis, the mother of Asclepius, the warder-off of pain; he speaks of Apollo, the unshorn. His loud-voiced hymn calls on the helper of the sons of Cecrops.⁴

Not much later than Sophocles' paean the so-called Erythraean hymn (T. 592) must have originated: the inscriptions on which it is to be found can be dated between 380 and 360 B. C.⁵ The dactyls first praise Asclepius' parents, Apollo "who begat great joy for man when he mingled in love with Coronis in the land of the Phlegyae." Then Asclepius' children by Epione are commended: Machaon and Podalirius, Iaso, fair-eyed Aegle, Panacea, Hygieia.⁶ Finally the god himself is asked to come to the city and to grant that men "may see the sunlight in joy." Simple and formal though the words are, they nevertheless reflect the warmth of feeling and the confidence that Asclepius inspired in the hearts of the pious, the affection with which they worshipped him. Thrice he is hailed as the most renowned of demigods. Being himself a joy to men he imparts joy to them also through his children, above all through his daughter Hygieia, "the glorious," with whom he is invited to appear. The devout implore the god that he may make them "acceptable with bright Hygieia."⁷

The Erythraean hymn emphasizing health as the greatest gift of Asclepius is the perfect expression of the this-worldliness which throughout the centuries was so important an incentive in the veneration of the god. This motif remains dominant in the later hymns, but at the same time

⁴ The latest reconstruction of the fragments is that given by J. H. Oliver, *Hesperia*, V, 1936, p. 112; for the metre, cf. Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst*, 1921, p. 353. Oliver, *loc. cit.*, pp. 113 ff., suggests that this is not the famous paean to Asclepius, but rather one dedicated to Coronis and written "as an introductory hymn for a definite place in a familiar ceremony" (p. 121). This is not impossible, although it is difficult to ascertain, since so few words are preserved. That Sophocles should not have written a paean to Asclepius at all, and that another anonymous hymn should have been attributed to him at a later date on account of his well-known relationship to the god, seems, however, improbable to me. It is true, the paean to Asclepius is mentioned relatively late. But I think it was the famous paean that gave rise to the story concerning Sophocles and Asclepius, and not the reverse.

⁵ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1909, II, pp. 42 ff.; *Griechische Verskunst*, p. 353. I. U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina*, 1925, pp. 136 ff. Powell thinks that the hymn originated in Thessaly. This assumption is rightly rejected by Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 225, n. 3, who himself suggests Attic origin. Cf. also K. Keyssner, *Philologus*, XCII, 1937, pp. 281 f.

⁶ Cf. above, p. 87.

⁷ Wilamowitz, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1909, II, p. 45, commenting on the word *δοκίμους* in the hymn, says: "[The Ptolemaic copy] bittet den Gott, um das Sonnenlicht freudig schauen zu lassen *δοκίμους*, acceptos als *ἀνθρώπους εὐδοκίας*. Da ist das Verhältnis zwischen dem Gläubigen und seinem Gotte in der Richtung entwickelt, die der Dünkel der Juden und Christen als ihre spezifische Frömmigkeit in Anspruch nimmt." Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 137 f., has pointed out that even the Erythraean copy of the fourth century must have read *δοκίμους*.

they introduce other aspects of Asclepius' godhead. Thus Macedonius (T. 593),⁸ in the first century A. D., hails Asclepius and noble, delightful Hygieia; he addresses the deity that protects from disease. Yet a strong accent is laid on Asclepius' wisdom which was imparted to him by Chiron. It is in fact this wisdom that men glorify in the hymn, just as in Epidaurus they greeted Asclepius as the god of "lofty art" (T. 593a).⁹ Again a late Epidaurian morning chant of six hexameters (T. 598), which in a charmingly naive way urges the god to disperse sleep from his eyes and to heed the prayers of his worshippers, propitiates Hygieia, his prime power. But twice it heralds Asclepius as the "gentle-minded," recalling his name, his character, his way of healing.¹⁰

Isyllus' paean (T. 594) is of a slightly different character. Here, the praise of the god's origin fills most of the verses.¹¹ Such an exposition was common in hymnology; yet Isyllus had a special reason for devoting so much space to this feature: he wished to expound the new genealogy which he himself had devised. Those who sang his words or listened to them were probably deeply impressed by his story, although Isyllus was not a great poet and in spite of his personal devotion could hardly inspire enthusiasm in others through his art. The myth itself charmed the Greeks,¹² and Isyllus wrote as an Epidaurian for Epidaurians. It must have delighted them to hear that the god was their compatriot. The mention of Asclepius as the giver of health and the liberator from disease, which occurs at the end of the poem, sounds rather conventional and cold. Only in his final words does Isyllus find expression for one particular wish which the other songs fail to include: "send bright health to our hearts and bodies."

The Orphic hymn (T. 601) finally rounds out the circle of laudatory poetry in honor of Asclepius' achievements.¹³ Himself young and mighty,

⁸ Concerning Macedonius, a rather famous poet of the first century, cf. Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst*, p. 133, n. 1. New readings are proposed by Keyssner, *op. cit.*, pp. 269 ff.

⁹ Keyssner, *op. cit.*, p. 278, calls the hymn "dichterisch unerfreulich." That may well be true. But it seems exaggerated to claim (*ibid.*, p. 269, n. 1) that Macedonius slavishly follows the Erythraean hymn. The judgment of Bülow, *Xenia Bonnensia*, 1929, p. 39, n. 1, in my opinion is more adequate.

¹⁰ For the metre of this hymn, cf. Maas, *Epidaurische Hymnen*, pp. 151 ff. I should add that in the older hymns the god is asked to protect their particular cities, whereas the Epidaurian hymn speaks of the worshippers of the god without any specification.

¹¹ For the metre of this hymn, cf. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 19; also pp. 125 ff.; 158. The song was written for the procession introduced by Isyllus, cf. *ibid.*, p. 14. Nilsson, *Griech. Religion*, I, p. 508, n. 7, seems to consider this poem the official hymn of Epidaurus; this is hardly correct.

¹² For the rôle of the myth, cf. below, p. 205.

¹³ That the Orphic hymns were composed and written down for Orphic congregations

"the enemy of diseases," he has as wife, "faultless Hygieia." He is the giver of gentle gifts, the softener of pains. But in these solemn hexameters it is also the terror of death that is felt: Asclepius is the one who stays the harsh fate of dying. In the same way Aristides, in one of the first lines which he dedicated to the god, had celebrated him: "From sharp-sighted death he rescued many who had advanced right to the gates of Hades whence none return" (T. 597), and thousands must have shared this experience. Moreover, the deity who is invoked by the Orphics, the savior, the blessed one, is also the one who grants "a good end to life." Death casts its dark shadow over man's heart, but death at the same time gives him a right understanding of life; it bestows upon him tranquility of mind and serene certainty concerning the Here and the Beyond; this-worldliness and other-worldliness are thus integrated.

These are the songs dedicated to Asclepius that have survived. Many more were written in the course of the centuries.¹⁴ In some cases at least the name of the author is attested. Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, composed a hymn to Asclepius (T. 603), and so did Apuleius (T. 608), and Isodemus (T. 588).¹⁵ Aristides, the prophet of Asclepius, must have dedicated a great number of poems to the god. Allusions to these songs are frequent throughout his work (T. 604 f.). He wrote them in various metres, in hexameters and elegiacs, in anapaestics or iambic dimeters, and it seems that he was a poet of considerable talent.¹⁶ Doubtless he saw to it that his compositions were brought before the members of the Asclepius congregation. He prides himself on having paid for no less than ten singings of the chorus (T. 605a); even in his dreams, he heard young boys sweetly intoning his verses (T. 597). Other hymns were probably written by others, for special occasions or for definite places.¹⁷

and were not merely literary products, has been shown by A. Dieterich, *Kleine Schriften*, 1911, p. 86; cf. also R. Wünsch, *Pauly-Wissowa*, IX, p. 171, 18 ff.; I. M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, 1941, pp. 179 ff.

¹⁴ Occasionally inscriptions record dedications to Asclepius in the form of hymns. Thus the priest Diophantus, saved by his god from podagra, uttered his thanks in a poem praising the might of the deity who had enabled him to come again to the sacred temple and to fulfill his duties (T. 428). The song is written in the favorite anapaestic iambic metre of late hymnology; cf. O. Crusius, *Pauly-Wissowa*, V, pp. 1050 f., who rightly rejects the assumption of Wilamowitz and Kaibel that the metre was invented "ad ipsum podagricorum usum"; for the interpretation of the poem, cf. also above, p. 125. Another example of such divine poetry is T. 596, attributed to Aristides by R. Herzog, *S. B. Berl.*, 1934, pp. 753 ff.

¹⁵ Maas, *op. cit.*, p. 155, reads † 'Ἀλυσόδημος; Proclus wrote a hymn to Asclepius Leontouchos (T. 826a).

¹⁶ For the metrical form of Aristides' poems, cf. Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst*, p. 134.

¹⁷ Attention should be drawn to those hymns which are to be found at the beginning of medical books, or which were added to a prescription, invoking the god to come and

Whether there was one generally acknowledged cult hymn of Asclepius, it is difficult to decide. Although Epidaurus played so important a rôle in the dissemination of the Asclepius worship, the various temples remained independent in their rites, and the songs probably differed as greatly as did the rules of sacrifices.¹⁸ On the other hand, it seems that some of the songs enjoyed a certain preference. The Erythraean hymn was performed in Athens as well as in Macedonian Dium and in Menschieh in Egypt; a few changes or additions were made to render the text suitable for the particular circumstances.¹⁹ Moreover, as the dates of the various inscriptions show, this song, composed in the fourth century B. C., was still performed in the Christian era, just as Sophocles' paeon was still heard in the Athenian temple around 200 A. D. (T. 589).²⁰ In every religion there is a tendency to conservatism and traditionalism. But new hymns were also written and were in use, as is proven by the number

impart his power to that which was written or that which was prepared for the recovery of the sick. The hymn that introduces the work of Serenus (T. 615), written in hexameters, is a perfect example of the "Du-Stil" (cf. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 1913, p. 174), with the predication of the god given in relative clauses: "you who know how to impart new lives, you who cherish Aegae, Pergamum, Epidaurus and the Tarpeian rocks." In another poem, in elegiac metre, preserved among the works of Galen (T. 595) and written by the elder Andromachus, a physician under Nero, the god is implored to enhance the efficacy of the drug to be given to the emperor: "Whether the Triccaean ridges hold you, O demigod, or Rhodes, or Cos and Epidaurus on the sea." For the disjunctive form in which the divine places are named here, cf. Norden, *op. cit.*, pp. 144 ff. T. 614 too may be mentioned here. It is taken from the poem found at the end of the work of Marcellus, a physician around 400 A. D. Riese, *ad locum*, is hardly right in rejecting the authorship of Marcellus, cf. M. Niedermann, *C. M. L.*, V, 1916, p. xxi. In hymnology, the epithets given to the god play an important part. A few of the cognomina are collected in T. 623 ff. For additional material, cf. C. F. H. Bruchmann, *Epitheta deorum*, in Roscher, *Lexikon*, Suppl., 1893; Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, pp. 83 f. Another example of the use made of Asclepius' name should be mentioned at least: the swearing by Asclepius (T. 618 ff.; 266; 337). The testimonies do not indicate that it was any particular class of people to whom the oath was restricted. For the significance of the various oath formulas, cf. E. Ziebarth, *De iure iurando*, etc., Diss. Gött., 1892, pp. 10 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Eid, V, pp. 2076 f. In Galen's time it was apparently quite common to swear by Asclepius of Pergamum (T. 620). Late sources ascribe even to Socrates the oath by Asclepius (T. 622).

¹⁸ Cf. above, p. 189.

¹⁹ The changes made in the hymn of Dium (T. 592a) are summarized by Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst*, p. 353, n. 3. The Egyptian copy, the first one found, was edited by J. Baillet, *Revue Archéologique*, XIII, 1889, pp. 70 ff. For its readings, cf. Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 138. Concerning the addition of a few lines, cf. Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 133. Following Powell's example only the oldest (T. 592) and the most complete version (T. 592a) of the hymn have been included in the collection of the testimonies. An Athenian copy is preserved, *I. G.*, II², 4509; cf. Oliver, *op. cit.*, p. 115. The Pergamene hymn (T. 607) began with a mention of Telephus, but failed to name Eurypylos, the Mysian hero who slew Machaon, cf. T. 512.

²⁰ The Egyptian hymn can be dated in 97 A. D. The Athenian inscription probably stems from the turn of the second to the third century, cf. Oliver, *op. cit.*, p. 115. The paeon of Dium was inscribed in the second century, cf. G. P. Oikonomos, *Ἐπιγραφαὶ τῆς Μακεδονίας*, IV, 1915, pp. 8 ff.

of other songs preserved or mentioned. Especially in Hellenistic times novel expression was given to human feelings, and though the old hymns continued to be recited, new ones were favored.²¹ Only the reactionary temper of the Roman period reverted to archaic compositions, at least in the official cult; yet even Lucian (T. 588) does not claim more than that the singing of old hymns is no less honor to the gods than the singing of those recently invented, and the example of Aristides is evidence of the fact that the production of hymns did not immediately cease in the first two Christian centuries. Later, Porphyry with apparent approval refers to Aeschylus who, when asked to write a new song to Apollo, answered that the old one would do better, "for new religious songs, like new religious statues, though probably more elaborate and refined, and consequently more admired, have less of the splendor of the divine about them."²² After Porphyry, the general attitude certainly became even more conservative.

On the other hand, during the same period in which the performance of old hymns became more and more customary, the word sung in honor of the god was in ever increasing rivalry with the word spoken to the same end. The prose hymns or *encomia* may well be compared with sermons.²³ They were recited in the temple (T. 608), or in the theater sacred to the god (T. 806), whenever one of his great festivals took place; in white holiday attire the people sat and listened. The subject of the orations was the power and greatness of the god (T. 609; 388). In their arrangement the speeches usually followed a definite pattern, as it was evolved by ancient rhetoric.²⁴ To the modern mind, they may seem dry and artificial, bombastic and lacking in real fervor. Greeks and Romans were easily swayed by oratorical feats performed in rhetorically and stylistically perfect language. When distinguished orators like Apuleius (T. 608), or Aristides (T. 317), or Acacius (T. 388), celebrated the god in elaborate addresses, they must have stirred in their audience an aesthetic excitement that intensified the religious experience, and many a hearer's concept of the god was likely to be shaped by what he heard in these lectures during which the stage of Asclepius became a school house, as it were.²⁵

²¹ Cf. Wünsch, *Pauly-Wissowa*, s. v. *Hymnos*, IX, p. 164, 60 ff.

²² Porphyry, *De abstinentia*, II, 18.

²³ Cf. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, p. 165.

²⁴ Thus Aristides follows rhetorical theories (cf. Norden, *loc. cit.*). Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, p. 7, n. 5, has rightly stressed the fact that some of the greater inscriptions, as for instance that of Apellas (T. 432), come close to the literary standards of a sermon.

²⁵ Such sermons were also published (T. 609) and consequently had a wide circulation among the educated. But their literary importance hardly equalled the influence of the spoken word.

Besides, in these sermons, even more than in the songs, two expectations of the worshippers must have found satisfaction: the one, characteristic of all Greek devotees, was to hear about their god's mythical deeds; the other, especially characteristic of the followers of Asclepius, was to be assured of their god's providence and care for the individual. As for the splendor of the myth, Aristides' speech in honor of the Asclepiads (T. 282) is a good example of the account that was expected. Here, the god and his sons are placed in their proper relationship to Zeus and Apollo, they are seen as outstanding members of the society of the Olympians, in which the Greeks never tired of reveling. But Machaon and Podalirius, and therewith Asclepius, were also connected with the world of the Homeric heroes. Superior to all of them they decided the fate of the Trojan war: the fall of Troy was entirely due to them. Afterwards the two took possession of the whole world; they themselves left Thessaly and went to Asia Minor, to the islands; their children, happier and better than the Heraclids, inherited the *oecumene*. Thus even the present moment was colored by the glory of the divine legend and the heroic myth of old. The believer in Asclepius, through kinship with his god, himself became part of the mythical world for which he longed.²⁶

On the other hand, Aristides' speech on Asclepius (T. 317) shows the intensity with which the providence of the god was experienced, the help of him "who is looking after man." Aristides feels that through Asclepius he has lived not only once, but many times. Years and decades have been added to his span of life through the divine oracles. His body is a present which he has received from the god. Even more: everything that Aristides has accomplished he has achieved through Asclepius. Wherever he found success, it was Asclepius who caused men to applaud his faithful servant. In the care of Asclepius, Aristides, just like everybody else, is sheltered from all dangers and evils, he is secure and safe, whatever may befall him.²⁷ Granted that these encomiasts were given to

²⁶ For the importance of the myth in antiquity, cf. J. Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, I⁵, pp. 15 ff. He says (p. 29): "... der Mythos als eine gewaltige Macht beherrschte das griechische Leben und schwebte über demselben wie eine nahe, herrliche Erscheinung. Er leuchtete in die ganze griechische Gegenwart hinein, überall und bis in späte Zeiten, als wäre er eine noch gar nicht ferne Vergangenheit, während er im Grunde das Schauen und Tun der Nation selbst in höherem Abbilde darstellte." Pausanias, I, 35, 6, is a particularly instructive example for the mythical fantasy of the average people even in late centuries; cf. Burckhardt, *ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁷ For the god's concern with the individual, cf. above, pp. 111 f. The orator here becomes, so to speak, a witness of the deity. This, one must keep in mind if one wishes to understand correctly Aristides' *Sacred Speeches*. They are by no means merely egotistic representations of what happened to him. Others who did not want to speak in their own name took their text from the dedicatory inscriptions (T. 388). But in these cases, too, it was personal experiences that were recounted.

exaggeration and that they flattered the god and those who listened, a kernel of truth nevertheless remains: Asclepius was the god who took a deep interest in the individual, and it was proper and justifiable to praise him on that account.

If one looks back now on the vast mass of divine poetry and prose that is preserved or referred to in the testimony, one may safely state that there was an extremely rich store of literature dedicated to Asclepius.²⁸ This may be explained first of all by the fact that he was so popular a god, and by the circumstance that from the beginning of his healing activity he had among his clientele many poets, rhetors and philosophers who reciprocated his gifts with works of art. Aelian delights in pointing out that Asclepius was wont to take care of the educated (T. 456), and the testimonies, indeed, give the impression that the god was the special protector of this class of people.²⁹ Moreover, it would be erroneous to believe that they felt indebted to Asclepius only if he had healed their diseases. The god was the giver and preserver of health, and health is essential, if the spirit is to obey, as Aristides says (T. 323). Naturally, then, the intellectuals felt close to Asclepius, even when they were in good health. Nobody is more dependent on the obedience of the spirit than are literary men, who, as Celsus asserts somewhat sarcastically, are almost without exception fragile and liable to disorders, if they do not look after their well-being.³⁰

There may be still another reason for the many poetic productions offered to the god: not only did Asclepius have so many devotees who were qualified to commemorate his power in words or songs; he was himself reputed to have inspired, or even requested literary gifts (T. 590). He was credited with giving the literati the ability to accomplish their task (T. 610), to write poetry and prose. But why should such a

²⁸ The frequency of divine songs addressed to Asclepius seems to indicate that in the worship of this god particular attention was paid to singing. If this is correct, the Asclepius cult would form an important link between the pagan and the Christian ritual; from the earliest times hymns were an integral part of the Christian ceremonial, cf. J. Kroll, *Die Antike*, II, 1926, pp. 258 ff.; H. Abert, *ibid.*, pp. 282 ff.

²⁹ This fact has been emphasized by Weinreich (*Heilungswunder*, pp. 4 f.; 7, n. 4; 113; 129 f.), who has also pointed out that Sarapis had to assume a similar rôle so as to be able to compete with Asclepius, *op. cit.*, p. 118. Among Asclepius' patients were Apollonius (T. 397), Aristarchus (T. 455), Theopompus (T. 456), the rhetor Aeschines (T. 404), Plutarch and Domninus (T. 427), Hermocrates (T. 434), Polemon (T. 433), Proclus, the philosopher (T. 445), and Aristides. Since the names of the god's patients are known only in relatively few cases, the list is rather impressive, although it must be admitted that names of famous patients were more likely to appear in literary documents than those of ordinary people.

³⁰ Celsus, *De Medicina*, I, 1, 2; cf. above, pp. 122 f.; 126.

belief have been current? Why should Asclepius have been especially fond of literary productions?

Libanius, the rhetor, thought that Asclepius as the son of Apollo had a natural affinity to literature and all the arts (T. 610).³¹ Still the son must not necessarily have inherited the cultural interests or talents of his father, and therefore have been able to apportion the gift of genius to whomever he desired, as Libanius claims that he was. But was not the Asclepius cult, from an early date, closely connected with the names of great poets and with events memorable in their lives? Whether Sophocles actually gave shelter to the god in his own home, or whether the god appeared to him only in a vision—it was believed that he had written a paean in his honor (T. 587 ff.), inspired by the god himself. According to one tradition, it was Sophocles himself who introduced the Asclepius worship in Athens (T. 591).³² The great poet then was known to have been the favorite of Asclepius. Was it not natural to conclude that the friendship which Asclepius had bestowed upon him would be extended and granted to Sophocles' fellow artists as well? In addition, in Athens the main festival of Asclepius was celebrated on the day preceding the Great Dionysia (T. 566), and it was on that day that poets and actors made their first appearance before the public.³³ What an occasion for all those interested in art! On this day that was dedicated to Asclepius, the whole city offered prayers and sacrifices to him. To be sure, the poets must have done likewise. Their thoughts must have turned to him for protection, for the fulfillment of their wishes and hopes. He who resided next to the great theater of Dionysus (T. 582) must have been near to their hearts. Finally one should remember that the word was considered a remedy of the soul (T. 617), that the *logos* was often named

³¹ The opinion expressed by Libanius goes back to older tradition. Even Aristides acknowledges that he owes his skill in writing to Asclepius (T. 317, 12). A physician whom Lucian quotes (T. 616) began his book by saying: "It is seemly for a doctor to write history, at least if Asclepius is the son of Apollo, and Apollo the leader of the Muses and the patron of all education." It is also noteworthy that as early as in the fourth century B.C. someone dedicated to Asclepius a prize won in a musical *agon* (T. 549).

³² Sophocles' relation to Asclepius has been discussed in detail by F. R. Walton, *Harvard Stud. in Class. Phil.*, XLVI, 1935, pp. 170 ff.; cf. also above, p. 117. The singularity of Sophocles' connection with Asclepius has hardly been appreciated in the modern discussion. There are no other cults in which the paean of a poet of the fifth century B.C. played a rôle comparable to that of the Sophoclean paean in the Asclepius cult.

³³ Cf. E. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften*, II, 1901, pp. 381 ff.; Deubner, *Attische Feste*, p. 142. H. Usener, *Kleine Schriften*, III, 1914, p. 241, sees in the *proagon* of poets and actors only a procession and an offering of prayers to the god. Even if this assumption were correct, it is still true that the day itself, sacred to Asclepius, was of great importance for poets and actors.

a physician.³⁴ Thus one may readily understand how Asclepius came to be the inspirer of writers and their special protector, why they in turn felt indebted to him for their productions and offered their works to him with grateful devotion.

6. GAMES

One last feature of the cult remains to be considered: the games connected with many of the festivals dedicated to Asclepius. Not only in the main centers of worship, but also in smaller and less important communities, contests as well as prayers and sacrifices formed part of the ritual.¹

Of all the games attested, those held in Epidaurus are the oldest known, although it is difficult to decide with exactness when they were celebrated for the first time. Pindar (T. 556) speaks of a victory in boxing and in the *pancratium* won at Epidaurus around 530 B. C.² In spite of the fact that he does not mention Asclepius, the ancient commentators did not hesitate to identify these *Epidauria* with the contests performed in honor of Asclepius (T. 557-59), the *Asclepieia*, as they were called later by Plato (T. 560). Such an identification seems plausible, yet it is by no means certain. At the end of the sixth century Asclepius was established as a god in Epidaurus, and the games may well have been founded at the same time. It is also possible that the contests mentioned by Pindar were much older and dedicated to another deity, that they were connected with Asclepius only after he had become the main god of the Epidaurians.³

³⁴ The identification of λόγος with φάρμακον or Ιατρός, which first occurs in the writings of the Pre-Socratics, gained in importance in Hellenistic centuries. For the dependence of Aristotle's poetical theory on medical concepts, cf. E. Howald, *Hermes*, LIV, 1919, pp. 187 ff.

¹ A list of the games mentioned in literature and on inscriptions is to be found in Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 1, p. 631, 10 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1683; cf. also Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 413. Recent excavations have greatly increased the data available; for this material, cf. especially Th. Klee, *Zur Geschichte d. gymnischen Agone an griech. Festen*, 1918. From those games which were performed regularly others must be distinguished which were celebrated only once as thank-offerings or *soteria* (cf. e.g. T. 547); for a discussion of this custom, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Agones, I, p. 842, 26 ff.

² Pindar refers to a victory of one called Themistius, the grandfather of the boy to whom his poem is addressed. *Nemean*, V usually is dated between 489 (L. R. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar, Critical Commentary*, 1932, p. 274) and 485/83 B. C. (Wilamowitz, *Pindaros*, 1922, p. 169). The year 530, therefore, would seem the earliest possible date for the victory of Themistius.

³ Concerning Asclepius and Epidaurus, cf. above, p. 98. No games except those in honor of Asclepius are known from Epidaurus; cf. Farnell, *op. cit.*, p. 280. That Pindar does not speak of the *Asclepieia* may be due to his dislike of this god (T. 1). On the other hand, all the Epidaurian victories mentioned by Pindar occur in songs which are dedicated to citizens of Aegina (T. 556; 556a; 556b), a town that had one of the earliest temples of Asclepius (T. 733); cf. below, p. 245. This seems corroborative proof of the assumption that the games referred to by Pindar really were the *Asclepieia*. Yet,

However that may be, from the end of the fifth century the Epidaurian contests are unequivocally referred to as those of Asclepius, and from that time onward they enjoyed widespread fame. People came from far and near to vie with each other when every five years, probably in the spring of the fourth year of the Olympiad and nine days after the Isthmiae, the games sacred to Asclepius were held.⁴ The judges of the contests were called *Hellandikai* (T. 557a). This title implies that Epidaurus claimed Panhellenic importance for its games, and apparently it succeeded in substantiating this right.⁵ The city that had given a new god to mankind commanded the respect of the whole ancient world.

The Epidaurian *Asclepieia* were celebrated throughout antiquity. So were the games of the god in other places, where Asclepius established his influence over the neighboring sections of the towns in which he resided and attracted visitors at least from the adjoining provinces.⁶ His power remained great enough to protect his games against the competition of other contests that were introduced in Hellenistic and Roman centuries and in many instances superseded older festivals.⁷

as has already been pointed out, it is also possible that the Epidaurian games originally belonged to another deity, perhaps Maleatas, and were later taken over by Asclepius. Ancient tradition names the Asclepiads as the original founders and the Argives as the instigators of the pentetere games (T. 559). The text of the testimony, a Pindar scholion, is perhaps corrupt; cf. Drachmann, *ad. loc.* Yet the meaning of the statement seems clear: the Asclepiads were the mythical founders of the contest, while the Argives, the foremost political power, were the real founders in historical times; similar distinctions are to be found concerning other games. Pentetere games were prevalent in later centuries (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, I, p. 844, 7 ff.); many of the games were re-organized during the sixth century (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 853 f.). At any rate, if the Epidaurian games from the beginning were sacred to Asclepius, they cannot have been instituted long before 530 B. C.

⁴ For the date of the festivals, cf. Klee, *op. cit.*, pp. 59; 70. Inscriptions concerning the victors in the games are extremely scarce (cf. Klee, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 f.). Pindar (T. 556) and Plato (T. 560) attest the fact that people from other parts of the country came to Epidaurus, some of whom are known as contestants at the other great festivals (Nemeae, Isthmiae, Panathenaeae). Wilamowitz, *S. B. Berl.*, 1909, p. 817, denies the sacred character of the Epidaurian games, because money was the prize. Yet T. 557 expressly says that the games were sacred to Asclepius.

⁵ Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, pp. 117 f., has stressed the Panhellenic character of the *Epidauria*. He is probably right in assuming that the games were intended to connect the Epidaurian festivals with aristocratic tradition. His claim that the visitors came only from nearby places, however, seems exaggerated.

⁶ To Cos, for instance, where contests were founded after 300 B. C., people came from all Asia Minor, cf. Klee, *op. cit.*, p. 118. The competitions were more or less identical with those of the Isthmiae, Nemeae, and Panathenaeae, yet prizes were given not only to the first, but also to the second contestant, in order to make the games more attractive. The epigraphical material from Cos yields considerable information concerning the names of the victors (cf. Klee, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 ff.).

⁷ For the gradual decline of older games and the rise of new ones, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, I, pp. 858; 860. For games in general, cf. J. B. Bury, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar*, 1890, Appendix D, pp. 248 ff.; F. M. Cornford in J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, 1912, Ch. VII;

As regards the program of such games, they consisted mainly of gymnastic contests. All kinds of sports that the Greeks used to perform in honor of their gods were practiced also in honor of Asclepius. Why should the giver of health and the liberator from diseases not have enjoyed physical exercises and competitions?⁸ Besides, musical contests were held. In Epidaurus they must have been introduced not long before the end of the fifth century B. C. For in the Platonic *Ion* (T. 560), Socrates expresses his astonishment that Ion, a rhapsodist, should have gone to Epidaurus to give a recital there. Apparently Socrates has never heard of singing contests at the Asclepius festivals, although he is familiar with the fact that games were held on that occasion. Ion has to tell him about "the contests of rhapsodies and of arts in general." At the end of the fifth century, then, the games which originally were of a merely gymnastic character must have been extended so as to include musical presentations, and such a development is in accord with changes in the programs of other games which are known to have occurred at that time.⁹ It is not impossible that the Homeric hymn to Asclepius (T. 31), the oldest hymn to the god that is extant, was composed for these Epidaurian contests. For this poem, too, was written at the end of the fifth century B. C., and it is a prooemium intended to be sung at rhapsodical recitals.¹⁰

Not much is known about the repertories of the musical games. That epics were recited one may conclude from Ion's report (T. 560). The presentation of a dithyramb is attested only once, in a late Athenian inscription (T. 549a).¹¹ This kind of musical play originally was sacred

E. N. Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World*, 1930, pp. 28 ff.; Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Agones, I, pp. 836 ff. I need not dwell here on the origin and the meaning of such games. When they were adopted in the Asclepius worship, they were an acknowledged form of tribute to the gods, not restricted to any special group of deities.

⁸ Some interpreters have expressed astonishment that the healer of diseases should have been celebrated with athletic contests. They forget that Asclepius was also the god of the healthy, and that sports traditionally formed part of divine festivals.

⁹ Unfortunately the date of the Platonic dialogue, or rather the time when Socrates and Ion supposedly met, cannot be determined exactly. It is not even known who this Ion was, or when he lived. Concerning the increasing number of musical contests after 500, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, I, p. 854, 24 ff. Wilamowitz, *Platon*, II, 1919, p. 37, denies that any conclusions concerning the Epidaurian festival can be drawn from the *Ion*; his arguments are not convincing.

¹⁰ All the shorter Homeric hymns are such prooemia, cf. Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 232. The singer usually began his recital of epic poems by praising the god in whose honor the festival was held. The hexameters of the Homeric hymn to Asclepius are very formal and unemotional in their wording, naming the god by his usual cult epithets. For the date of T. 31, cf. above, p. 68 and *E.R.E.*, *s.v.* Hymns, VIII, p. 41; for the relationship of the Homeric hymnology to Delphi, cf. above, p. 68, n. 3.

¹¹ Cf. O. Crusius, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Dithyrambos, V, p. 1228, 31 ff., especially *ibid.*, p. 1208, 10. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, p. 142, n. 3, suggests that the dithyramb was

to Apollo, and from his cult it seems to have been taken over into the ritual of Asclepius. But its performance must have remained restricted to rare occasions.

Tragedies and comedies, on the other hand, were probably played regularly. Maybe the god appreciated such tragedies as that which Aristarchus wrote as a thanksgiving after he had been cured by Asclepius (T. 455).¹² Maybe the comic poet Theopompus dedicated a play to the god who had given him the power to continue his work (T. 456), and the god enjoyed its content.¹³ But there is no certainty about any of the plays performed in Epidaurus, or Pergamum, or Cos. Literary sources and inscriptions are equally silent in this regard. Yet it seems permissible to suggest that in some of the works produced on the stage the god, his life and his deeds, were the subject which was elaborated. The Asclepius myth certainly lent itself to a representation in the true tragic fashion.¹⁴ It may likewise be assumed that the god and his patients were ridiculed in the manner of the Aristophanic *Plutus* (T. 420 f.), or of the play that Plautus transposed into Latin verse (T. 429 f.).¹⁵ The god and his worshippers were Greeks, they did not mind jokes, or fun poked at the divine. When they celebrated his festivals they could honor him with comedies no less than with tragedies.¹⁶

performed in honor of another god, while only the prize, a tripod, was dedicated to Asclepius. Telestes, the great dithyrambic poet of the fourth century B. C., wrote a poem 'Asclepius' (T. 613), of which a short fragment is preserved (for its stylistic analysis, cf. Crusius, *loc. cit.*, p. 1224, 41 ff.). Cf. also T. 73, a dithyramb of Cinesias.

¹² Concerning Aristarchus, cf. A. Dieterich, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 861 f.; he was an older contemporary of Euripides. No trace of his play is left; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 232, n. 3.

¹³ The text of T. 456 is corrupt and cannot be restored with certainty; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 232, n. 4. For the interpretation of the testimony, cf. Weinreich, *Heilungswunder*, pp. 1 ff. Theopompus was a contemporary of Aristophanes. There were other comedies with the title 'Asclepius': one by Antiphanes (T. 611) whose first works were performed after 387 (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, I, pp. 2519, 28 ff.), and one by Philetaerus (T. 612), perhaps a son of Aristophanes, at any rate a contemporary of Hyperides (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XIX, p. 2163, 65 ff.). The fragments are too short to allow a judgment concerning the content of these works.

¹⁴ The Hippolytus story seems to have been a favorite topic of dramatists, as Staphylus attests (T. 69). If their work was to be played in the theater of the god, it can hardly have contained any allusion to the fact that Asclepius was enticed by gold to heal Hippolytus (*e. g.* T. 72). The same consideration excludes the possibility that any of the plays referred to by Plato (T. 99) was ever performed at Epidaurus or at any other of the cult centers. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 83, n. 57, expresses the belief that Plato had contemporary tragedians in mind and that he cannot have meant Aristarchus. He adds that "die attische Tragödie die Asklepiosgeschichte beiseite gelassen hat, wenigstens diejenigen unter ihren Vertretern, welche die Kraft besaßen, dem Sagenschatz der Vorwelt für alle Folgezeit den Stempel ihres Geistes aufzudrücken."

¹⁵ E. Legrand, *Rev. des Études Anciennes*, VII, 1905, pp. 25 ff., suggests that the Greek original of Plautus was written for the Epidaurian theater.

¹⁶ Cf. in general P. Friedländer, *Die Antike*, X, 1934, pp. 209 ff.; especially pp. 225 f.

Finally, in the Christian era the program of the games celebrated in honor of Asclepius was enriched by a singular innovation: in Ephesus, in the second century A. D., the doctors of that city held a medical contest at the festival of the god (T. 573).¹⁷ What subjects they selected for their competitions cannot be determined exactly. The inscription on which the report about the event is preserved lists composition, a thesis, surgery and instruments. It seems that the competitors had to write an essay on a subject of their own choice and another one on a given problem. The treatise which was judged best carried off the prize. Subsequently operations were actually performed and the achievements classified, or more likely, the most successful and astounding cases of the past year were selected and given an award. Last, but not least, inventions or improvements of instruments were brought before the committee of judges, and whoever had done the most outstanding work received the crown. The jury consisted of the priest of Asclepius, of some especially appointed arbiter, and of the presiding officer of the association of physicians.

Whether such medical contests were restricted to Ephesus or not, it is too early to decide. New excavations may bring similar evidence from other cities. At any rate, physicians competed in the sanctuary of Asclepius, in addition to boxers, racers, singers, tragedians and comedians. There could hardly be a more fitting tribute to the god who was himself a physician.

This much can still be ferreted out concerning the outward ceremonial of the Asclepius cult. There are no features reminiscent of a chthonian worship. Asclepius was revered in the manner in which all celestial deities were venerated.¹⁸ It seems appropriate to add that the devotees of the god did not succeed in creating new religious forms, but rather followed the old-established pattern of worship. In those centuries in which Asclepius rose to power, the productive capacity for innovations in matters of religious observance seems to have failed.¹⁹ The new hymns which the god received, the new games that were introduced in his honor testify at least to the vitality with which the tradition inherited from the

¹⁷ Cf. J. Keil, *Jahresh. d. Oest. Arch. Inst.*, VII, 1905, pp. 128 ff., whose interpretation of the inscription I follow.

¹⁸ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 242, admits that this was true of the later period of the Asclepius worship, and that the traits of chthonian ritual, which he thinks he can detect, are rarely to be found. But even such a claim, in my opinion, cannot be substantiated.

¹⁹ Cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 408.

past was handed on from one generation of the faithful to the next. And one may perhaps claim that the followers of Asclepius played a leading part in the development of the ancient ritual toward an intensification of worship, toward the introduction of daily ceremonies, toward greater emphasis on singing.

But one must be aware that in dealing with rites, processions, sacrifices and games, and even with hymns and sermons, one is concerned only with the framework of the cult. Behind the external procedures that are still recognizable there was a more inward, a more spiritual experience that the testimonies do not reveal. Nothing is known of the "holy play," and yet it is certain that such a performance took place on the days sacred to the god.²⁰ Moreover, although the god's healings were the true mystery into which he initiated men (T. 402), in late centuries there may also have been secret rites of worship which were not divulged to everybody, oral disclosures kept zealously from common men, sights that were shown only to the elect.²¹ It was in such religious plays and initiations that the emotional life of the worshippers found its deepest satisfaction, and here the cult may have attained the goal of giving a new expression to a new belief.

²⁰ That every ancient cult included a religious play, a *δρώμενον*, portraying the divine myth, has been shown by H. Usener, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, VII, 1904, pp. 281 ff.; cf. also Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 301. By a curious chance of tradition the play performed in the cult of Asclepius Glycon is attested. On the first day, the childbed of Leto, the birth of Apollo, his marriage to Coronis, and the birth of Asclepius were represented (T. 29b), followed on the second day by an appearance of Glycon, and on the third by the union of Podalirius and the mother of Alexander (T. 210); cf. also Lucian, *Alexander*, 38-39. It is hardly possible to draw any conclusion from this report in regard to the content of the sacred play of the genuine Asclepius, although it is conceivable that his ceremony too lasted several days, and that on the first day the birth of Apollo, the marriage of Coronis and the birth of Asclepius were represented. Note that Aristides was asked by the god to sing of "the marriage of Coronis and of the birth of the god" (T. 606). For T. 29 b and 210, cf. also above, p. 160, n. 11.

²¹ The office of the *ιεροφάντης* is attested for Epidaurus (T. 498b), as it is for the cult of Asclepius Glycon (cf. Lucian, *loc. cit.*). For a characterization of the late *τελεται*, in which supposedly the true name of the god was revealed to the devout, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, p. 301; II, pp. 475; 541. But cf. above, p. 129, n. 15.

V. IMAGE

Just as the ancients did not think it sufficient to venerate the gods by believing in them, but deemed it necessary to give visible evidence of their faith, so they were not satisfied with gods who reside in the human heart alone. They wished to have them before their eyes, to look at them in bodily shape. In spite of the objections raised by some philosophers, the statues of the deities were never banished from the temples. They were in fact considered the true embodiment of the divine. With time progressing, this conviction grew stronger rather than weaker. Even philosophical opposition turned into approval. While Stoics like Seneca had inveighed against the reverence paid by men to dead pictures of stone, Neo-Platonists like Plutarch could speak to the statue of Asclepius and receive an answer from it (T. 427).¹

Natural though it may be for the modern to interpret the artistic representations of Asclepius solely in aesthetic categories, he must try to evaluate them also in terms of their religious significance. Did the Asclepius ideal, as it was evolved by the artists, agree with the concept of the god's nature, as it was held by the devout? What type of cult statue was the most common one and for what reason? What was the meaning of the attributes given to the god in his portrait? In regard to these questions the literary testimony assumes great importance. For it speaks clearly, while the monuments that are extant remain silent and are themselves in need of an interpretation which must be based on written information.²

¹ For the philosophical discussion of the question whether divine statues should be revered, cf. E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie d. Griechen*, III, 1, 1880, p. 313; 2, 1881, p. 697.

² Of course, the literary evidence is important also in other respects. The monuments that have survived are only a small fraction of those that once existed. The reports of ancient writers about images which they saw, often furnish data beyond the finds of excavations. Moreover, the authors refer to names of artists who made statues or other likenesses of the god; thus attributions largely depend upon the information that can be gathered from the written sources. Finally, just as the ancients themselves sometimes found it difficult to decide whether a statue was that of Prometheus or of Asclepius (T. 671), that of Hippolytus or of the god of medicine (T. 654), so has it been a matter of ardent debate among modern critics whether an image should be taken as that of Zeus or Asclepius, of Demeter or Hygieia. In such instances the literary reports may be decisive. For a discussion of the archaeological material, cf. B. Starck, *Die Epiphanien des Asklepios u. ihre Darstellung durch die Kunst*, *Arch. Zeitschrift*, 1851, pp. 341 ff.; Panofka, *Berl. Phil.-Hist. Abh.*, 1845, pp. 271 ff.; E. Loewe, *De Aesculapi figura*, Diss. Strassburg, 1887; Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, pp. 70 ff.; K. A. Neugebauer, *Asklepios*, 78. *Winckelmannsprogramm*, 1921; K. Sudhoff, *Handanlegung des Heilgotts auf attischen Weih Tafeln*, *Arch. f. Gesch. d. Medizin*, XVIII, 1926, pp. 235 ff.

1. LOCATION—MATERIAL—ARTISTS

In the ancient world, wherever men turned their eyes, there were gods to behold, and Asclepius' likeness was one of those that were to be found everywhere. The houses of the rich probably sheltered his picture like that of other deities; the homes of physicians were in possession of Asclepius images for the private worship of their inhabitants (T. 501). But the god was also to be seen on the market place (T. 668a), or he graced a spring with his presence (T. 643). Nor did he fail to adorn the shrines of other gods and goddesses. He was painted together with Machaon and Podalirius in the Messenian temple of Triops (T. 657). Somewhere else he was represented together with his daughters, Hygieia, Aegle, Panacea, and Iaso (T. 665). A panel showing Asclepius and Hygieia decorated the door by which people entered one of the temples of Demeter and Kore (T. 639).¹ Statues of the god of medicine were erected in the sanctuaries of Athena (T. 653), or Juno (T. 651), or Concord (T. 661).

But no matter how frequently the god may have been represented outside his own temples, it was naturally within his sacred abodes that his image was prominent. The votive offerings on which he was painted as well-doer (T. 539, 36) must have been innumerable. Made of cheap material, of wood or terra cotta, they were probably the favorite thanksgiving of the poor, hardly distinguished by any great aesthetic value; no ancient author takes the trouble of describing these mass products in detail.² But then there were the expensive marble reliefs which sometimes were of high artistic quality. The scene probably represented most frequently was a healing performed by the god; thus Aelian says of the offering of Theopompus: "The representation of his sufferings is very lively

¹ Mention should be made here of offerings to other deities on which Asclepius was represented, such as the table in the Heraion in Olympia (T. 641), or the statues dedicated by Micythus to the Olympian Zeus, among them Asclepius and Health (T. 642); cf. below, p. 245, n. 10.

² Such votive pictures are mentioned on the Epidaurian inscriptions (T. 423, 7), and also by Herondas (T. 482, v. 19); for their material, cf. O. Crusius-R. Herzog, *Die Mimiamben des Herondas*², 1926, p. 110 (*ad* Herondas, IV, v. 19); for the custom in general, cf. R. Wünsch, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.*, VII, 1904, p. 107. These paintings apparently were so inexpensive that even the miserly father depicted by Ps. Libanius, T. 539, would gladly have paid for such a thank-offering. A. Koerte, *Ath. Mitt.*, XVIII, 1893, p. 236, distinguishes three kinds of votive offerings: (1) imitations of the diseased part of the body, (2) representations of the patient thanking the god for his aid, (3) portrayals of the scene of healing. The cheap tablets with the god as well-doer would fall into the third category. G. Karo, *Weihgeschenke in Epidaurus*, 1937, on the basis of the Epidaurian inscriptions (T. 423) has reconstructed the subjects of votives which were probably dedicated by the sick.

—even the sickbed itself being made of stone. On this lies his (*sc.* Theopompus') wasted figure, carved with artistic skill. Beside him stands the god, stretching forth his healing hand to him, and a young boy, and he too smiles a little" (T. 456).³

In addition to such votive offerings, and to statues that were scattered throughout the sacred district (T. 673), the temple itself was studded with images of the god. His statue adorned the vestibule (T. 427), the altar in the propylaeum, and the *cella* (T. 630). He was shown alone or together with his wife, Epione (T. 631), surrounded by his children (T. 636) or by other deities (T. 482).⁴ In one case his likeness was placed between Isis and Sarapis (T. 672). The favorite grouping, however, seems to have been that of Asclepius and Hygieia (T. 638; 660), he seated and his daughter standing by his side (T. 663).⁵

The statues of the god, like those of other deities, were made of stone (T. 668), more particularly of white marble (T. 670), Pentelic (T. 671) or Parian (T. 673), sometimes of ivory (T. 674) or ivory and gold (T. 675), of wood (T. 677), or of bronze (T. 676). The selection of the material was determined by the varying tastes of the times, by the means available, or sometimes by ritualistic reasons: trees that were sacred to the god seemed an especially appropriate matter in which to carve his portrait (T. 677).⁶ Again like other gods, Asclepius was represented either standing (T. 679, n. 2) or seated (T. 680, n. 2), sometimes on a throne. The latter position was apt to emphasize his superior rank, and it is not by chance that he was thus depicted in Epidaurus (T. 680), the size of the statue being half that of the Zeus of Phidias (T. 630), which was about seven times life-size.⁷

In only one respect did Asclepius' portrait differ considerably from

³ In my interpretation of T. 456 I follow that of Weinreich, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 1 ff. Even if the scene depicted were a "funeral repast," at which the god is present (cf. L. Ziehen, *Ath. Mitt.*, XVII, 1892, pp. 237 f.), the fact remains that many of the votives preserved resemble Aelian's description.

⁴ The excavations at Cos have proved that Leto, Helius, Hemera, Hecate, Heracles, Aphrodite were depicted together with Asclepius; cf. Herzog, *Mimiamben*, ad v. 10.

⁵ For the importance of Hygieia, cf. above, pp. 89 f.

⁶ T. 677 attests that the Asclepius statue in Sparta was made of *agnus castus*. Since in the fabrication of cult statues wood was later commonly given up in favor of stone, Loewe, *De Aesculapi figura*, p. 7, concluded that this was one of the oldest images of the god. But this inference is not conclusive, as there were exceptions to this rule, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Kultbild, Suppl. V, pp. 492 f. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 86, seems right in claiming that *agnus castus* was sacred to Asclepius because of its medical importance. Note that the cult statue in the possession of the physician Nicias was made of cedar-wood (T. 659).

⁷ For the Zeus of Phidias, cf. G. M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, 1930, p. 219, who adds that the statue occupied "the full height of the temple." For the various postures of the divine statue, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. V, p. 500, 30 ff.

that of other deities, at any rate from that of the great gods: he always wore a chiton and in most cases also shoes. The garb of Asclepius and his sandals were proverbial (T. 686; 687).⁸ The artistic tradition, then, was conscious of the fact that the god of medicine had originally been a human being, and that he never became an equal of the Olympians. For only the gods of old, the aboriginal gods, were represented as nudes; deified mortals were not pictured in this way; Asclepius, therefore, always appeared draped.⁹ In general the chiton was probably made of the same matter as the statue. Sometimes it consisted of other material (T. 669), in one case the image is said to have been wrapped in a tunic of white wool and a cloak (T. 678).¹⁰

Some of the statues must have been masterpieces. The greatest names known in the history of Greek art are linked with the representation of Asclepius. Yet it is noteworthy that of the sculptors of the fifth century, only Alcámenes (T. 647), Colotes (T. 648), and Calamis (T. 649) are referred to.¹¹ Neither Myron, nor Phidias, nor Polyclitus is credited with the portrayal of the god of medicine. The ancients themselves, at least in late centuries, apparently took umbrage at the fact that none of these men who came to be recognized as the outstanding classical sculptors were reported to have created a likeness of Asclepius. It is probably for this reason that one testimony (T. 645) ascribes the Epidaurian cult statue, which was actually made by Thrasymedes in the fourth century B. C. (T. 630), to Phidias, or that Libanius (T. 646) pretends to know of an Asclepius image by Phidias, made in the likeness of Alcibiades. As a matter of fact, in the fifth century, the temples of the god did not yet attract the

⁸ Note the expression "clad in the garb of Asclepius" (T. 686), and "When this mantle itself . . . and sandals . . . serve to flatter Asclepius" (T. 687); cf. also T. 492.

⁹ In my interpretation of the Asclepius statue I have followed A. Furtwängler's analysis of the portrayal of Heracles who, at least in the classical period, was usually represented with a chiton (Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Herakles, I, 2, p. 2147, 36 ff.). The literary evidence is in agreement with the archaeological findings: no nude Asclepius statue is known, cf. W. Wroth, *Numismatic Chronicle*, II, 3rd Ser., 1882, pp. 301 ff.; Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, p. 79; Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1690, 60 ff. Only a few coins of very late date show the god undraped; cf. O. Bernhard, *Griech. u. Röm. Münzbilder in ihrer Beziehung z. Gesch. d. Medizin, Veröffentl. d. Schweizer Ges. f. Gesch. d. Med. u. Naturw.*, V, 1926, p. 15. These deviations from the rule must be explained by the fact that at the end of antiquity Asclepius sometimes was equated with Zeus, cf. above, p. 107, n. 22. It was owing to the same development that in late centuries Heracles was portrayed nude, cf. Furtwängler, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 249 f., surmises that statues covered with a fabric chiton must have been extremely ancient. This is not correct. The wrapping of the image seems to have been due to a special ritual or mode of preservation, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. V, p. 499, 37 ff.

¹¹ It has proved impossible to identify any of these statues among the extant monuments. Concerning Alcámenes, cf. L. Curtius, *Antike Kunst*, II, 1926 ff. (*Handb. d. Kunstwiss.*), p. 265; for Colotes, *ibid.*, p. 267; for Calamis, cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

best among the famous artists, or could not pay for their services.¹² The situation changed from the fourth century onward. Statues of the god by the sons of Praxiteles (T. 651; 482), if not by Praxiteles himself,¹³ by Scopas (T. 652 f.), by Timotheus (T. 654), by Thrasymedes (T. 630), by Bryaxis (T. 655 f.) are attested. In later centuries, too, the most prominent sculptors are mentioned as having fashioned images of Asclepius, men like Phyromachus (T. 658), Damophon (T. 660), and others,¹⁴ and occasionally it is said that their fame in part rested on their Asclepius representations (T. 661). The sanctuaries of the medical god, which in the fifth century B. C. were still relatively unimportant, in the course of time became so well established that they were able to commission those who were most skillful in the arts. Sculptors and painters, on the other hand, began to recognize that to work for Asclepius was as much of an honor as it had been for their ancestors to adorn the sanctuaries of Apollo, or Athena, or even of Zeus.

2. THE ASCLEPIUS IDEAL

None of the numerous Asclepius statues that are extant can be identified with certainty as one of the sacred cult statues of the god.¹ The literary testimonies, on the other hand, repeatedly refer to temple statues of Asclepius. But in all these references it is the external data alone that are given, the place where the image was erected, the material of which it was made, the posture of the god, and the like. Even those descriptions

¹² Archaeologists have tried to trace some of the extant statues to Myron, Phidias, Polyclitus or their pupils, cf. in general Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1691, 46 ff.; A. Furtwängler, *Meisterwerke*, 1893, pp. 394; 84, n. 4; 489, n. 2. None of these attributions have been generally accepted. In this connection it should also be noted that no likeness of the god is older than the fifth century B. C. No Asclepius representation occurs on early vases, cf. Welcker, *Götterlehre*, II, p. 742. Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1691, 18 ff., rightly rejects Kern's attempt (*Eph. Arch.*, 1890, pp. 131; 142) to interpret one Boeotian vase as picturing Asclepius.

¹³ The sons of Praxiteles, Timarchus and Cephisodotus, worked for the Coan temple. Concerning their works and the fragments found, cf. Herzog, *Mimiamben*, ad IV, vv. 5; 23. Their father is credited only with a statue of Trophonius "which also resembles Asclepius" (T. 650).

¹⁴ Phyromachus' statue was at Pergamum (T. 546); Damophon was especially famous for his attempt to revive the art of Phidias in the spirit of the Hellenistic period, cf. F. Winter, *Griech. Kunst*, Gercke-Norden, II³, 1922, p. 182. Other artists named are Eëtion (T. 659), Niceratus (T. 661), Timocles and Timarchides (T. 662), Xenophilus and Strato (T. 663), Boëthus (T. 599, 600). Of painters are mentioned Omphalion (T. 657), Socrates (T. 665), and a woman, Aristarete (T. 666).

¹ A. Schober, *Oesterr. Jahresh.*, XXIII, 1926, p. 12, calls the Asclepius of Melos a cult statue; R. Carpenter, *The Greeks in Spain*, 1925, pp. 105 ff., does the same in regard to the Asclepius of Emporion; but such assumptions remain hypothetical, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. V, p. 494, 63 ff.

which give a detailed account of the attributes with which the god was adorned fail to consider the expression of the face or the countenance of the figure. Only one feature is almost unfailingly mentioned that has some bearing on the type of representation: the presence or absence of a beard; in other words, it is noted whether Asclepius is portrayed as a mature man or as a youth (T. 682; 681).

Now, as is well known, bearded and unbearded representations of the same divine figure often varied in accordance with the changing taste of the centuries or existed simultaneously, though with regional variations, according to popular likes and dislikes.² At first glance, therefore, one is inclined to believe that in regard to Asclepius, too, the preference for one type or the other depended primarily on aesthetic ideals, and the data known concerning the early portraiture of the god seem to confirm such an opinion. The oldest cult statue attested, that by Calamis (T. 649), showed Asclepius as a youth. In Calamis' time youthful pictures of the gods were prevalent.³ The young Asclepius type, in the fourth century B. C., survived in the images made by Scopas (T. 652) and Timotheus (T. 654). But Thrasymedes depicted the god as a mature man;⁴ the fourth century B. C. began to prefer bearded statues of the deities. After 350 B. C., however, the situation changed: despite fluctuations in the aesthetic evaluation, the mature Asclepius apparently became and remained the favorite type of representation. The god of Pergamum and the god of Cos were bearded, like that of Epidaurus.⁵ Moreover, the testimony insists on the fact that it was characteristic of Asclepius to have a beard (T. 685), just as it was characteristic of Apollo to have

² Furtwängler, Roscher, *Lexikon*, I, 2, pp. 2151 f.; 2162; 2178, has outlined the change which took place in the representation of Heracles as bearded or unbearded in accordance with the criteria referred to above.

³ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 277, calls the youthful Asclepius an "eccentric" work. This seems hardly appropriate. Even in the time of Calamis bearded images of Asclepius existed (cf. the relief in the Piraeus Museum, Curtius, *Antike Kunst*, II, p. 236, fig. 409). But there certainly was no general agreement concerning the representation of a god who was as yet so unimportant. Nor do I agree with Farnell's suggestion (*ibid.*) that Asclepius was represented beardless, because he was the son of Apollo. Nothing is known about Calamis' intention, and Farnell's argument sounds as if it were deduced from the objections of the ancients to the bearded representation of Asclepius (T. 683; 684). It seems more natural to explain the manner in which Calamis portrayed the god by the trend of the time.

⁴ That the Epidaurian Asclepius was bearded is not mentioned by Pausanias (T. 630), but it is evident from T. 683; for the interpretation of this testimony, cf. also below, p. 249, n. 30. Cf. also T. 850, *vv.* 654 ff., and the Epidaurian coins, Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 282 and fig. 733; Bernhard, *op. cit.*, table II, no. 28.

⁵ For Cos and Pergamum, cf. Bernhard, *ibid.*, nos. 36; 29. It is noteworthy that even the coins of Sicyon and Gortys, where the beardless statues of Calamis (T. 649) and Scopas (T. 652) are attested, show the god with a beard, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1691, 50 f.

none, and the ancients were not slow in making mocking remarks about this curious divergence between father and son. Dionysius ordered the removal of the golden beard of the Asclepius statue at Syracuse, since he did not think it fitting for the son to wear a beard, while his father in all his temples appeared beardless (T. 683). Lucian, in his satirical vein, encourages Apollo to speak boldly and not to be sensitive about talking without a beard, although he has such a long-bearded, hairy-faced son in Asclepius (T. 684). Arnobius, comparing Apollo and Asclepius, refers to the great weight and the philosophic thickness of the latter's beard which makes it uncertain which of the two gods is the father, which the son (T. 683c). For the people at large, Asclepius was the god who was seen with a "flowing beard" (T. 850, *v.* 656). It is evident, then, that the bearded type was more commonly found than the beardless one, which seems to have been preserved and treasured as a relic of older times, but after the fourth century was hardly copied any more. And it is a fair assumption that this was so because the mature figure was held to be the more appropriate representation of the deified physician.⁶ He who had become a god after having healed men during his life on this earth could be better imagined as advanced in years than as a young person, and aesthetic reasoning could not prevail against the claims of religious fantasy.

But nobody will believe that Greek artists were satisfied with indicating the nature of Asclepius' godhead only by the rather superficial trait of age. While in the fifth century B. C. they hardly individualized the images of the various deities except by their respective attributes, from the fourth century on sculptors commonly characterized the several gods more clearly by their facial expression and their general appearance. As regards the portrayal of Asclepius, there is at least one testimony that pretends to outline a likeness of this god with reference to the ideal which it is intended to express, to its "character" rather than to its external appearance: Callistratus' description of a statue of Paeon (T. 627). Though the rhetor of the fourth century A. D., being more interested in words than in art, is not the best authority that can be wished for, his report requires careful interpretation if for no other reason than for its uniqueness.⁷

⁶ Farnell who most strongly insists that the bearded Asclepius was "the canonical type" says, *Hero Cults*, p. 277: "It was felt that the full imaginative presentation of the divine physician demanded maturer forms, bearing the imprint of the thought and experience that comes with long studious years."

⁷ That Paeon here is identical with Asclepius must be concluded from the fact that in the words of Callistratus "Asclepius infused his own power into the statue." The description therefore has rightly been used by H. Brunn, *Griech. Götterideale*, 1893, p. 107, in his analysis of the Asclepius ideal. Concerning Callistratus, cf. A. Fairbanks

Callistratus begins by analyzing the countenance of the statue. It enthalls the senses, he claims, not because it is "fashioned to an adventitious beauty," but rather because it radiates dignity mixed with compassion.⁸ This impression of an emotion of indescribable profundity apparently is strengthened by the peculiarity of the eye which is turned upward, looking saintly and benign. Next, Callistratus describes the hair. Curly locks fall on the back and over the forehead down to the eyebrows. Yet it is not the fullness of the hair that is most astonishing; the locks are curled "as if stirred by life and kept moist of themselves." Finally the statue as a whole is commented upon: "although all things that are born are wont to die, yet the form of the statue, as though carrying within itself the essence of health, flourishes in the possession of indestructible youth."

Thus the account of Callistratus. Do the features accentuated by him reflect a certain ideal? Do they become the god of medicine more than any other deity?

Dignity and compassion: to the ancients, the physician was the ruler of his patients, their king. He commanded and they had to obey. That is why dignity is ascribed to Asclepius. Yet the physician did not assume leadership in his own interest. His orders were given solely for the sake of others. He became master only through his desire to help; he laid down laws only out of regard for his fellow men. That is why the dignity of Asclepius is tempered with compassion.⁹

The eye turned upward: unlike Zeus, Asclepius does not face the spectator; unlike Zeus, the god of medicine does not simply nod approval or disapproval, he does not simply grant or reject the wishes of his supplicants. The help which he gives is not so much the consequence of his power as it is the result of experience, intelligence, wisdom. Asclepius ponders over the case before him. That is why his eye is not fixed on a definite point; it is vaguely directed into the distance, while his thought tries to visualize what he should do or advise.¹⁰

in his edition of *Philostratus and Callistratus*, 1931, pp. 369 ff. [Loeb]; concerning the history of the *Ekphrasis* in general, cf. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius*, 1912, Intr.

⁸ The word *aidōs*, which I have translated as dignity, is rendered by Fairbanks as modesty. But *aidōs* at best is moderation, and most commonly it is respect for others, especially for the helpless. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 278, also understands the words in question as "dignity mingled with compassion."

⁹ The ancient concept of the physician as the ruler over his patients (cf. above, pp. 111 f.) accounts for the similarity of the Asclepius ideal with that of Zeus, a similarity which Brunn, *op. cit.*, p. 107, has rightly emphasized, but in my opinion has failed to explain fully.

¹⁰ I have borrowed my interpretation from Brunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 99; 103, who in this way distinguished the eye of the Zeus statue from that of the Asclepius portrait.

The expression of the eye chaste and propitious: Asclepius is a physician, integrity and love of mankind are the two qualities which the divine healer embodies in agreement with the demands made upon his human followers.¹¹

The locks' curl as if stirred by life and kept moist of themselves: Asclepius is the giver of life; he is the one who postpones the dryness of death and restores to the body its natural moisture, the sap of life. The embodiment of indestructible youth: Asclepius gives health, he grants it to men to see forever the light of the sun.¹²

Certainly there is not one feature in Callistratus' account that cannot be understood as a symbol of those qualities which are characteristic of the ancient concept of Asclepius. Yet is it likely that a statue as Callistratus pictures it ever existed? He remains rather vague in his description; he does not name the artist of the portrait, nor the place where it is to be seen.¹³ Twice he stresses the fact that the material does not render obedience to the law of art: the impossible, it seems, is here accomplished, and Asclepius is said to have infused into the statue his own power, giving it "purposeful intelligence" and thus making it "a partner with himself." Moreover, there is a certain contradiction in Callistratus' description. For the last words indicate that the statue is that of a person in the spring of life, the embodiment of youth, as it were. And yet, can dignity and compassion, which are mentioned in the beginning, be imagined in a youth? Are they not rather the virtues of a mature man? Are pity and sanctity and wisdom and experience the characteristics of a youthful person, or are they not rather the accomplishment of a man of ripe age, versed in the vicissitudes and sufferings that life has in store for men? Callistratus' portrait apparently is the outgrowth of the rhetor's own fantasy, an imaginary picture rather than the semblance of an artistic reality.

Still, it would be rash to conclude that the various features which Callistratus integrates into his imaginary likeness of the god of medicine were his own inventions. The youthful Asclepius, of whom the testimonies speak, certainly was the embodiment of youth, of health and life. The Asclepius who could be taken for Hippolytus (T. 654) must have been young and beautiful, and Libanius' claim that Phidias made an image of Asclepius in the shape of the young Alcibiades (T. 646) also points to a likeness of the beautiful youth.¹⁴ On the other hand, the pictures of

¹¹ Cf. above, p. 113.

¹² Cf. above, pp. 122 ff.

¹³ In other instances Callistratus is more specific, cf. *e.g.* *Imagines*, 1; 6; 11.

¹⁴ A. Kalkmann, *Arch. Zeitung*, XLI, 1883, p. 39, has claimed that Hippolytus was represented bearded (cf. also Eitrem, *Pauly-Wissowa*, s.v. Hippolytus, VIII, p. 1870,

Asclepius, as one Hellenistic writer attests (T. 448), were wont to represent him as gentle and calm, and these two qualities were equally characteristic of his posture as of the expression of his face. This statement, referring to the usual portrayal of the god, must concern the bearded type that was dominant.¹⁵ The features which it describes as essential for the impression conveyed by the divine likeness, are not different from those traits which in addition to youthfulness and vigor of life Callistratus ascribes to his statue: compassion, benignity, thoughtfulness. In short, the rhetor, in his analysis of the Asclepius ideal, has combined the two intentions which were to determine the artistic representation of Asclepius. The youthful god, one must judge, in the sprightliness that pervades the crisp form of his body, came to symbolize the dispenser of health.¹⁶ The mature god, in his serene dignity and composed energy, was the physician who heals men through treatment or advice. Not only was he a mature man, in his entire attitude he expressed the concept of the physician.

To create the likeness of Asclepius was a difficult task indeed. No poetical description could guide the fantasy of the artist, as it did in the creation of the ideal of those deities of whom Homer had sung. In the Epic, Asclepius was but a name. Nor did the divine myth recount any events which could serve to impart inspiration. The legend was devoid of action and passions.¹⁷ Many an attempt may have been made in the beginning by various sculptors to translate into stone the concept of Asclepius' godhead, or it may have been one happy thought that immediately found general acclaim. Whatever the historical development, uniformity was reached only when the artist endeavored to express in his medium the quality of mildness which the name of the god implied for the ancients, when he succeeded in representing the benign and friendly character of the god, when he depicted that power of giving and pre-

66 ff.) simply on account of the assumption that otherwise the image could not have been taken for the likeness of Asclepius. But there were unbearded statues of the god of medicine. Moreover, Hippolytus at Troizen was venerated as the chaste young hero, the symbol of youth; the Troizenian maidens on the eve of their wedding used to sacrifice their hairlocks to him. F. Wieseler, *G. G. N.*, 1888, p. 146, therefore rightly rejected Kalkmann's opinion. For Phidias' portrayal of Asclepius, cf. above, p. 217.

¹⁵ Archaeologists have always stressed the mildness expressed on the face of the bearded Asclepius. Thus Curtius, *Antike Kunst*, II, pp. 324 f., says of the oldest Asclepius relief preserved: "So hingebend milde war bisher kein griechischer Gott gewesen. Das ganze Relief lebt nur von seiner Gebärde."

¹⁶ I hesitate to claim that the youthful Asclepius from the beginning had this symbolic meaning. For as has been shown above, p. 219, in Calamis' time youthful representations of the gods were quite common. Moreover the work of Calamis certainly had other implications, cf. below, p. 226.

¹⁷ Cf. above, pp. 74; 85.

serving life which endeared Asclepius to his followers.¹⁸ Nor is it astonishing that the bearded type was the one which occurred in the cult statues almost to the exclusion of the unbearded one, that the youthful figure was cast into oblivion by the mature god. Those who came to his temples needed the help of the physician even more than that of the dispenser of health, for they were sick, and to be liberated from disease was their main concern.

So strong was the hold of the Asclepius ideal over his worshippers that no other manner of portrayal could compete with this: Asclepius in the likeness of a child never became popular. In one of the Arcadian sanctuaries dedicated to Asclepius the Child (T. 773), there was a statue, a cubit high, showing the god as a boy (T. 679). Such a representation may have been connected with the saga of Asclepius' childhood in Arcadia, and it may have occurred also in other regions where the god was supposed to have grown up.¹⁹ Or perhaps it was meant as an image of Asclepius, the patron of children. The god was fond of the young and showed great love for them.²⁰ Whatever the significance of such statues, they are rarely mentioned; apparently they were not commonly approved. This fact is the more remarkable since in Hellenistic and later centuries scenes from the youthful age of the gods became a favorite subject of artistic representation, as is evidenced by the images of the Dionysus child or the Hermes child.

Yet, not even that type of representation was accepted by the worshippers which is attested for a work of Boëthus, an artist of the second century B. C. He pictured Asclepius as a child "who has just been borne by his mother" (T. 599), "a young child such as the goddesses of child-birth brought forth from the maiden, daughter of Phlegyas, for unshorn Phoebus" (T. 600).²¹ Whether the infant was depicted alone or together

¹⁸ Cf. above, pp. 68 ff. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 232, points to the fact that the artistic representation reflects the ancient etymology of the name of Asclepius. But he is hardly correct in contrasting the ideal of the artist with that of the common worshipper. In this connection I should also mention the theory according to which the representation of Christ, in early centuries, was dependent on the Asclepius ideal; cf. A. v. Harnack, *Medicinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte*, 1892, p. 106; C. Bonner, *Harv. Theol. Rev.*, XXX, 1937, p. 123, n. 12. Modern histories of Christian art usually reject such a view, cf. e.g. C. M. Kaufmann, *Handbuch d. christl. Archäologie*, 1922, p. 368. However, considering the character of the Asclepius statue and the many resemblances that existed between Christ and Asclepius, the hypothesis is not entirely unfounded.

¹⁹ For the worship of Asclepius the Child, and for the various legends concerning Asclepius' infancy, cf. above, p. 71, n. 14.

²⁰ Cf. above, p. 198. That the representation of Asclepius as a child points to his patronage over children has been suggested by Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 276 f.

²¹ That T. 599 and 600 actually refer to a work of the famous Boëthus of the second century B. C. is now generally agreed upon; cf. C. Robert, *Pauly-Wissowa*, s. v. Boëthos, III, p. 605, 21 ff.; Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

with his mother, does not become entirely clear from the description. Reading it one can hardly fail, however, to be reminded of the new born child so often portrayed with his mother, the savior child, in whom the ancients put their trust.²² It is impossible to tell whether Boëthus when creating his statue had this wonder-child in mind. But when Nicomedes, the physician of the third century A. D., dedicated the work of Boëthus in the Roman temple of Asclepius²³ and in his verses recounted the story of mother and infant (T. 599; 600), he must certainly have thought of Isis and her child, or even of the Christ Child. He must have been instigated by the wish to celebrate his savior child, to elevate him above that of the Egyptians and that of the Christians.²⁴ Yet, the followers of Asclepius refused to listen to the prophecies of other religions. Their savior was not a child, an infant, he was a mature man who through his divine wisdom preserved their health or liberated them from sickness.

3. ATTRIBUTES

Divine statues almost always showed the god adorned with attributes that symbolized his power or his rank. Even after the artistic representation of the various deities had taken on individual features, symbols continued to be added. The Asclepius statues formed no exception to this rule. Few if any images portrayed the god simply in a chiton and with sandals on his feet. At least a crown of laurel was wound around his head (T. 691), or other insignia were put into his hands or placed beside him.¹

²² The most famous document attesting this belief is Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*. For the interpretation of this poem and its religious background, cf. E. Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes*, *Studien d. Bibliothek Warburg*, III, 1931.

²³ Cf. Robert, *loc. cit.*

²⁴ Note the words ἀπριτικός (cf. Lucian, *Dialogi Deorum*, VII, 1) and κόρη. Nicomedes dedicated the statue to Asclepius in gratitude for "recovery from illness" (T. 599) and for "avoidance of sickness" (T. 600). Certainly, then, it is the physician Asclepius, the savior, rather than the patron of children, who is addressed by his devotee. Any identification or equation of Asclepius with Harpocrates was facilitated by the fact that Asclepius was the son of Apollo, of Helius, as the Neo-Platonists said (cf. above, p. 108), just as Harpocrates in late Egyptian theology was regarded as son of Sarapis-Helius. Again like Asclepius, Harpocrates, the child god in the Egyptian trinity, was the one nearest to men. Influence of Egyptian ideas on the late Asclepius cult is indicated by the fact that in Epidaurus, Apollo and Asclepius were revered with the surname "Egyptians" (T. 739, 6). The development of the idea of the Savior Child has been analyzed by Norden, *op. cit.*; for the late Egyptian concept of the triad, cf. J. G. Milne, *E. R. E.*, s. v. Graeco-Egyptian Religion, VI, pp. 376 ff. Representations of the Madonna with child occur from the middle of the second century A. D., especially in the Roman catacombs; cf. J. Reil, *Die altchristlichen Bildzyklen des Lebens Jesu*, *Studien über christliche Denkmäler*, X, 1910, p. 2.

¹ For a survey of the attributes of Asclepius statues, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1680 ff. Bowl, diadem, scepter, head-cloth, crowns of pine, laurel, medicinal plants are attested. A. Furtwängler, *Bonner Jahrb.*, LXXX, 1891, p. 50, has drawn attention to the fact

The literary testimonies describing Asclepius' likeness discuss his attributes only occasionally. Most of the authors being of a relatively late date do not seem to have thought it important to speak about the symbols which had become stereotyped and were quite familiar to everyone. At any rate, accounts of attributes that were actually seen on monuments are less frequent than theoretical explanations of their significance, given without reference to any particular image.

It is fortunate that at least those symbols are attested which adorned the youthful Asclepius of Calamis and the mature god of Thrasymedes. Calamis, as Pausanias relates, represented Asclepius "holding in one hand a scepter, in the other a cone of the cultivated pine" (T. 649). Pausanias has nothing to say about the meaning of these attributes, nor are they ever mentioned by any other writer in connection with Asclepius. The scepter could indicate the god's power, as it does in the cases of Zeus and Hera, and probably in those of Poseidon and Hestia.² But in Calamis' time Asclepius was not yet one of the most highly respected and powerful deities. It is therefore more likely that his scepter, like that of Hermes, was the staff which brings sleep to men and wakes them up again, an appropriate symbol for the god of dreams.³ The pine cone, on the other hand, is a conventional symbol of moisture, that is, of vitality and fertility; it is indicative of the sap of life. This attribute, usually connected with Dionysus or Poseidon, seems not unfitting for the god who restored to life and who granted and preserved health.⁴

Entirely different from the symbols which Calamis chose for his Asclepius were those with which Thrasymedes embellished the Epidaurian god. He depicted him "seated on a throne, grasping a staff, while holding the other hand over the head of the serpent, and a dog lying by his side" (T. 630). From the Epidaurian coins it can be concluded that

that the bowl, for instance, is to be found with many deities, even at a time when artists differentiated the divine figures by their facial expression rather than by their attributes.

² Cf. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie*, pp. 662, n. 6; 1132, n. 2; 1162, n. 5; 1404, n. 6.

³ Cf. *Iliad*, XXIV, 343; *Odyssey*, V, 47; XXIV, 2. Homer speaks of the *πάβδος* of Hermes, but this magical staff is also called scepter, cf. Roscher, *Lexikon*, s.v. Zauberstab, V, p. 544, and in general *ibid.*, pp. 547 ff. In this connection it should be remembered that in Munychia around 400 B.C. Hermes was revered together with Asclepius, cf. above, p. 186.

⁴ For the pine cone and its relation to Dionysus and Poseidon, cf. W. Otto, *Dionysos*, *Frankf. Stud. z. Rel. u. Kultur d. Antike*, IV, 1933, pp. 146-47. Gruppe, *op. cit.*, p. 1449, n. 5, has rightly stressed the resemblance between Calamis' representation of Asclepius and that of Dionysus. Cf. also Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, p. 71, n. 7; J. Murr, *Die Pflanzenwelt in d. griech. Mythologie*, 1890, p. 120 (remedy?). It is not known which were the attributes usually given to the youthful Asclepius, but one may assume that other artists followed Calamis not only in the type of the figure, but also in the choice of symbols.

it was the left hand that held the long staff, whereas the right hand was turned to the snake.⁵

The problem of the dog's selection as an attribute of Asclepius is not discussed by ancient authors. Yet it seems certain that Asclepius inherited this attribute from Maleatas, with whom he was associated in Epidaurus. Maleatas was a hunter and was fond of dogs. His sanctuary was situated on the hill *Kynortion* and itself was called *Kyon*. When Asclepius usurped the place of the deity whose accessory he had once been, the dog became sacred to him because of old it had been the friend of Maleatas.⁶ It is also possible that in Thrasymedes' time the dog was regarded as the animal which had nursed the babe Asclepius after he was exposed by his mother. This story is reported not only by Tarquitiuss (T. 9) and Festus (T. 691) but also by Apollodorus (T. 5), who adds that the dog was suckling the infant when it was found by hunters. In the second century B. C., then, it was the dog who played nurse to the child, not the goat as the later saga had it (T. 7), and this older version of the Asclepius birth myth may well go back to the fourth century and may have been in Thrasymedes' mind when he chose to represent the dog lying by the side of the god. Later the story was forgotten and the dog ceased to be represented together with Asclepius.⁷

Staff and serpent, which, in addition to the dog, appeared on the Epidaurian Asclepius, were explained by the ancients in various ways. One

⁵ For the Epidaurian coins, cf. Bernhard, *op. cit.*, no. 59. No copies of Thrasymedes' statue have been traced, cf. Gruppe, *op. cit.*, p. 1457, n. 6.

⁶ Cf. Nilsson, *Griech. Feste*, p. 409, n. 7: "Dass der Hund ursprünglich diesem Gotte eignete [sc. Maleatas] ist ein sicherer Schluss Blinkenbergs (*Asklepios og hans Fraender*, Kopenhagen, 1893, S. 22 ff.) aus *I. G.*, II, 1651 [= T. 515; the sacrifice to dogs in Munychia] und dem Umstand, dass der Hund als Begleiter des Asklepios zuerst und am häufigsten in Epidauros auftritt." For Epidaurian coins (between 323 and 240 B. C.) showing Asclepius with the dog, and for monuments of this type from early Athens and Epidaurus, cf. F. R. Walton, *Harvard Studies*, XLVI, 1935, p. 178. For the place of Maleatas' sanctuary, cf. Pausanias, II, 27, 7; *I. G.*, IV², 1, no. 109, i, 128; the sanctuary of Asclepius was located at the foot of the *Kynortion*. Cf. also Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 226 f.

⁷ T. 5, 9, and 691 are commonly understood as mistaken versions of the Epidaurian legend, as told in T. 7; cf. e. g. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1682, 55 ff. But such an interpretation is not convincing considering the fact that T. 5 can be traced to Apollodorus. Rather does the version, according to which the dog was the nurse of Asclepius, seem to form an important link in the development of the divine myth which underwent so many changes, cf. above, pp. 72 f. When later on shepherds replaced the hunters, when the goat took the place of the dog, when the birth story of the peaceful god assumed a more Arcadian coloring, the dog was referred to only as the watchdog of the herd. On the assumption that the dog story is old, one also understands better why in Munychia a sacrifice was offered to hunters (T. 515), cf. above, p. 186. I should mention that Xenophon states that Asclepius learned hunting from Chiron (T. 56). The rôle played by the dog in Asclepius' life may partly account for the custom of keeping dogs in his temple, as Festus maintains (T. 691). But cf. also below, n. 10.

faction saw in the wand a sign of relief and support which the god granted (T. 706). Others found in it an indication of the medical inventions which prevent men from falling into sickness (T. 705). Still others took the stick, especially the knotted staff, as a symbol of the difficulty of the art which the god practiced (T. 691).⁸ As for the serpent, some said, the god had reared this animal on Pelion and later had made it his servant (T. 697 f.). Others claimed that the serpent had been acquired by Asclepius after he had healed Glaucus (T. 704a).⁹ Apart from such historical accounts there were symbolical interpretations. The serpent was taken as sign of the rejuvenation which Asclepius brought about; for the animal restores itself by shedding its skin (T. 701). Again, the serpent was understood as a symbol of sharp-sightedness which the physician needs (T. 706), or of vigilance and guardianship which are also his duties (T. 702), or of the healing power as such, for the snake was used as a remedy (T. 699). Finally, the belief was current that the reptile, being itself mild and friendly, indicated the mildness of the god of medicine (T. 700).¹⁰

Of all the attributes staff and serpent, to the ancients no less than to the moderns, are the typical symbols of the god, they are truly "Asclepiadic." Cornutus, when analyzing the significance of the concept of Asclepius, concentrates on these two attributes and does not even mention any others (T. 705). The same holds good of many other commentators (*e. g.* T. 706). Moreover, most of the statues preserved show the god with staff and serpent. What, then, was the real meaning of these symbols? What were they intended to indicate concerning the nature of the god?

As regards the staff, all the ancient interpretations may contain a kernel of truth: it may symbolize support or relief, inventiveness or profundity of knowledge. At least it may have done so in the opinion of later generations. Yet, it is hard to believe that from the beginning the

⁸ This explanation is probably inspired by the famous first aphorism of Hippocrates: *ὁ βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ* (IV, p. 458 L.).

⁹ Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1681, 43 ff., claims that the Pelion story is more original than the Glaucus version (for Glaucus, cf. above, p. 51, n. 100). I do not think that the priority of either can be affirmed.

¹⁰ Since serpents were sacred to Asclepius, they were kept in his temples (T. 696). But there were also other animals, geese (T. 423, 43), dogs (T. 500), cocks (T. 466), sparrows (T. 730). These, too, were sacred to the god, or dedicated to him, or they served as guardians of his temple. The fact that the god sheltered animals is often taken as proof of the superstitious character of his worship, or of the revival of primitive concepts, cf. *e. g.* Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, I, pp. 25, n. 2; 154, n. 3. But Wilamowitz himself admits (*ibid.*, p. 149, n. 2) that animals were kept in other sanctuaries, without charging that this custom was based on superstition. Besides, it should be remembered that Asclepius was also a healer of animals (T. 378).

rod was of merely symbolic importance. The staff, particularly the long one which reached up to the armpit, was the walking stick which people used when on a journey. Asclepius, the physician, had to do extensive travelling, not only while he was a human being, but also later when he had become a god. He went from Troizen to Epidaurus and back again (T. 423, 23). He wandered all over the earth to help everybody everywhere. The staff, therefore, may at first have been the natural attribute of the travelling physician, and with this significance it may have been retained on many images of the god even in late centuries. When the divine power of Asclepius had become more and more a matter of course, the wand lost its original meaning; it was now understood in a metaphorical sense, it became the symbol of Asclepius' helpfulness or wisdom.¹¹

To determine the meaning of the serpent in connection with Asclepius is very difficult. That the snake indicated the rejuvenation which the god perfected, or his shrewdness, or his medical knowledge cannot be denied entirely. But it seems more plausible that the animal symbolized the mildness and goodness of Asclepius, his guardianship over men. Friendly daemons were often revered in the shape of snakes. The serpents of Asclepius were famous for being tame with men (T. 692),¹² and it was known that their bite, if they struck at all, was not dangerous (T. 700). The snakes that were sacred to the god of medicine were often kept as house-snakes (T. 694); the ancients were fond of having serpents in their homes, as guardians over men and possessions.¹³ For whom, then, should the serpent have been more appropriate as an attribute than for Asclepius who embodied mildness and philanthropy?

One fact, however, must be emphasized: although to the modern the serpent seems inseparably connected with the god of medicine, and although the ancients themselves felt that it was the particular servant of Asclepius, the animal in fact was sacred to many more deities, and to the

¹¹ Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1681, 30 ff., suggests that Asclepius' staff originally had a religious meaning, and in confirmation of this opinion he refers to the Coan festival of the *ἀνάληψις ῥάβδου* (T. 568); cf. above, p. 196. In general, cf. F. J. M. de Waele, *The Magic Staff or Rod in Graeco-Italian Antiquity*, 1927, pp. 91 ff. Clement, *Paedagogus*, I, Ch. VII (*Opera*, ed. O. Stählin, I, 1936, p. 126, 4 ff.) speaks of the *ῥάβδος παιδευτική* which heals in those cases in which words and threats fail, and he connects this symbol with Christ. But to apply such an interpretation to Asclepius seems hardly warranted.

¹² It was only in Titane that people were afraid to approach the sacred serpents (T. 700a). Sometimes the enormous size of the reptiles is mentioned (T. 421, v. 734; 448).

¹³ The relation of the snake to the ancient house cult has been most strongly emphasized by Nilsson, *Popular Religion*, p. 71; concerning the Good Daemon, cf. *ibid.*, p. 73. The serpent and its importance for Greek religion in general has been discussed by E. Küster, *Die Schlange in der griech. Kunst u. Religion*, R. G. V. V., XIII, 2, 1913.

most divergent ones at that. Zeus, Sabazius, Helius, Demeter, Kore, Hecate, and all the Heroes were adorned with snakes (T. 703).¹⁴ A statue of Trophonius was difficult to distinguish from that of Asclepius because the serpents on the image could be explained as sacred attributes either of the one or of the other (T. 690). It is impossible, therefore, from the serpent attribute to draw any conclusions regarding the original nature of the god, or if this is done, he may be called with equally good reason an Olympian, a chthonian god, or a hero.¹⁵

All the symbols with which the god was depicted were relatively late inventions. The hero of the Hesiodic poem, the patron of doctors, had no such attributes. When Asclepius became a god, when his statue was set up in his temples, he also received insignia of his power as they were customarily given to ancient deities. Tradition does not tell which attributes were connected with Asclepius in the beginning, nor does it indicate where the various symbols first occurred. Staff and serpent seem characteristic of the mature cult statue for which they are attested as early as the work of Thrasymedes. The staff cannot be traced to any local tradition, whereas the serpent seems to have been the typically Epidaurian attribute of the god. The specific kind of serpent which is sacred to Asclepius is to be found in Epidaurus only, says Pausanias (T. 692). And it was in the shape of the serpent that Asclepius came from Epidaurus to other places, to Athens (T. 720), Halieis (T. 423, 33), Sicyon (T. 695), Epidaurus Limera (T. 757), Rome (T. 846).¹⁶

¹⁴ Snakes are also known from the cults of Athena and Dionysus; cf. Gruppe, *Griech. Mythologie*, pp. 92; 1203, n. 2. For Zeus and the snake, cf. Nilsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 67 ff.; A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, II, 2, 1925, pp. 1091 ff. In the modern discussion, the fact that Asclepius was not the only god to whom snakes were sacred has been neglected, or at least not properly evaluated.

¹⁵ Küster, *op. cit.*, p. 120, and Nilsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 71 ff., have shown that the snake is not indicative of the chthonian origin of the deity with whom it is connected, as had been generally supposed. The theory that Asclepius was a chthonian god largely rests on this obsolete interpretation of the snake as a chthonian symbol; cf. above, p. 66, n. 8.

¹⁶ The fact that Asclepius appeared in the form of a snake is often taken as indicating that in the Asclepius religion old superstitions survived which had long been rejected by truly religious people; cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 231. But theriomorphic gods continued to be revered throughout antiquity; even Homer spoke of the metamorphosis of gods into animal form. When Ovid, describing the appearance of the serpent in the Epidaurian temple, makes the priest say: "The god! Behold the god" (T. 850, v. 677), he is giving expression to a belief almost universally shared: it was felt that the deity was present in his sacred animal. Moreover, in the dreams of his patients Asclepius appeared in human form. This is sufficient proof that the belief in his theriomorphic appearance cannot have been an experience that distinguished the Asclepius cult from those of other Greek gods. Finally, one should not forget that the god was supposed to be embodied in the snake mostly in those instances in which his worship was carried to other places. All translations of a cult, it seems, presupposed not only that the rites attached to the deity had to be learned (T. 848), but also that some symbol of the deity had to be acquired and installed at the new sanctuary, be it a statue or a stone or an animal or the like.

Wherever the god went, the animal followed him (T. 448), or it was twined around his staff (T. 706). Poets could allude to "the Epidaurian snake" as an expression familiar to everyone (T. 693; 693a; 289). It is most likely that the Epidaurians who created the god also gave him that attribute which was destined to remain his own forever.

Whatever the origin of the main attributes of Asclepius, this much is certain: they were suggested by his medical activity and by the specific character of his godhead, just as the image of the god was shaped in accordance with the Greek ideal of the physician.

VI. TEMPLES

Temple medicine, ritualistic rules, and artistic representations of Asclepius in the foregoing chapters have been dealt with in order to catch a glimpse of a reality that has passed away. The discussion of these subjects has also put to proof the hypothesis proposed in regard to the character of Asclepius' godhead. A last test remains to be applied which bears mainly on the presuppositions made concerning the time and place of Asclepius' deification and the position of his cult in ancient religious life. Does the history of the temples confirm the assumption that Asclepius was a late god, that Epidaurus was the city of his origin, that his worship, having spread throughout the *oecumene*, continued to exercise its power up to the end of antiquity? Moreover, which were the particular factors that in certain regions retarded or quickened the ascendancy of Asclepius? For one will not be satisfied with knowing that Asclepius became generally accepted because he was a true deity, because he was the preserver of health which the ancients cherished more than any other of the human goods.¹

Of course it will never be possible to reconstruct the process of Asclepius' recognition in all its details. Although hundreds of sanctuaries are referred to in literary sources or have been accounted for by inscriptions, a great number of the shrines that once existed will be unknown forever. The judgment of the modern historian, therefore, to a certain extent must remain conjectural. On the other hand, it may seem that this is not yet the proper moment to attempt an evaluation of the data. Places of veneration not mentioned in the written evidence have been unearthed by archaeologists in the past, and their work is still progressing. New discoveries are bound to be made. But the more important sanctuaries, with the exception of Tricca, have been excavated. The regional expansion of the temples and their chronology have in the main become clear. The outlines of the history of the sanctuaries, I think, can be established now without too much fear that the conclusions drawn from the material available will be controverted by future findings.

1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Before turning to the discussion of historical problems proper, it seems worth while to ask whether the shrines of Asclepius were truly divine abodes. For the modern, it is difficult to realize that the Asclepieia should

¹ Cf. above, pp. 111 ff.; 119 ff.

have been places of worship on a level with those dedicated to Zeus or Apollo. Again and again he is tempted to imagine them as hospitals, religious hospitals to be sure, in which prayers and rites were as indispensable as dietetic treatment and drugs, but hospitals nevertheless. When he reads of Plutarch's claim that the Greeks selected clean and elevated places outside the city for the Asclepieia (T. 708), when he hears Vitruvius enjoin the rule that the shrines of the god of medicine should be built in healthful surroundings (T. 707), he feels confirmed in his belief that the temples of Asclepius were something unique in ancient religious life. But Plutarch's statement is in contradiction of the facts.¹ Vitruvius' theories are indicative of a sceptical rationalism toward the divine healing power which he supposes to be in need of a favorable climate and good air in order to be effective. In reality, the sanctuaries of Asclepius, like those of the other gods and goddesses, were situated in all places which pious reverence considered sacred, either on account of old tradition or because they seemed to have something of the divine about them.² Asclepieia were established in valleys (T. 739) and on the tops of mountains (T. 762), outside towns (T. 759), and within the walls of cities (T. 725). They were especially to be found in cities where human activities were concentrated. Just as every community had its Zeus or Apollo, it had its Asclepius. When people passed the Asclepieion, they entered to pray or to attend the ceremonies; here they met other people and could be found by those who wanted to meet them (T. 712).³

Moreover, the Asclepius of the town, the local god, acquired all the power of attraction that accrued to ancient deities through their presence in the community, through their connection with the daily pleasures and sorrows of one generation of men after another. In early centuries, it had been necessary for most people who sought Asclepius' help to make a lengthy journey, for his shrines were still scarce. Later, the invalids could go to the temples near their homes. For the town folk, this was the sanctuary of their own city; for the peasants, it was the shrine in their provincial capital. Themistius neatly expresses the common attitude when, referring to an Asclepieion that in his time lay in ruins, he says:

¹ Cf. above, p. 158. The sources of Plutarch's statement are not known; the thesis may well be his own (cf. H. J. Rose, *The Roman Questions of Plutarch*, 1924, p. 207).

² Thus the Epidaurian temple was built, where Apollo Maleatas had been revered; other Asclepieia were established over old Apollo temples; cf. below, p. 246, n. 16. If the shrine was situated outside the city, it was placed there not for hygienic, but for religious reasons. The solitude of mountains and valleys, for the Greeks, was awe-inspiring and fraught with divine presence, cf. Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 98. Naturally, in new cities where a site for the temple could be chosen wherever it seemed most advisable, people in some cases may have selected a spot for its healthfulness.

³ For the ceremonies that took place in the temple, cf. above, pp. 191 ff.; 195 ff.

would you go to Tricca, if Asclepius were still here in his sanctuary? (T. 385). It was not only human laziness, it was not only the expenses and dangers of travelling, the inconveniences of a long trip, especially hard on the sick, it was mainly the preference for the ancestral god and the familiar temple that tended to give to the local Asclepius cult a predominant rôle in the life of his devotees.

On the other hand, in the worship of Asclepius as in that of all ancient gods, a strange spell was cast over distant sanctuaries. The places which the god himself seemed to like best were viewed as those in which his power was greatest, where he did especially good work. If the disease was dangerous and the local Asclepius failed to take care of it, if the patient was in a condition to travel and to spend money, or even if the pious simply wished to express his gratitude and his reverence for the deity in whom he trusted, pilgrimages to one of the great sanctuaries were made. Sometimes these were the most famous shrines of a certain province. Aegae was visited by all Cilicians (T. 817), Lebena by all Cretans and Libyans (T. 792). Cos was approached from far and near. All of Asia came to Pergamum (T. 792). And then there was Epidaurus, the city where Asclepius was born. Such places, above all Cos, Pergamum and Epidaurus, were the Olympia of Asclepius, his Delphi and Delos.

In these centers of worship to which everybody came who wished to pay special homage to Asclepius, his temples must have been magnificent indeed, comparable to those shrines in which Zeus or Apollo or Athena dwelt. It is very difficult to imagine their splendor and beauty. Even the most ingenious scholarly reconstruction in plaster or on paper gives but a faint semblance of the sanctuaries that now lie in ruins. If one happens to come across a passage in which an ancient writer describes such a temple which he saw still intact, which he viewed in the spirit of those for whom it was built, it is as if for a moment the past came to life again. Among the testimonies mentioning the shrines of Asclepius, there are two which have the peculiar charm of giving such an illusion to the reader: Herondas' fourth mimiamb, the scene of which is laid in Cos, and Pausanias' report of his visit to the temple of Epidaurus. In a certain sense the two descriptions are complementary. Herondas speaks mainly of the interior of the temple, while Pausanias pictures the sacred district in general; the poet dwells more emphatically on the artistic sights, the professional traveller more on the historical facts and spatial data. Although the two testimonies are separated by an interval of almost five centuries, although they deal with different sanctuaries, it seems permissible to consider them together so as to give a picture of an Asclepius temple as it was seen in antiquity.

In the open propylaeum, in front of the *cella* where Asclepius resides, the women of Herondas' poem (T. 482) stand before the altar on which the sacrifices are burned. They are face to face with statues made by the sons of Praxiteles, representing Apollo, Coronis, Epione, Hygieia, Panacea, Iaso, Podalirius, Machaon—Asclepius' whole family, his ancestors and his descendants.⁴ Besides these divine images, however, the women see many more monuments, votive statues of extraordinary beauty: a girl looking up at an apple; an old man; a boy strangling a goose;⁵ a portrait of a woman whom they know, a speaking likeness, so lively that one may look at this image "and be satisfied without the woman herself" (v. 38); and finally simpler gifts, placed somewhere near the divine statues, just as the women themselves put their painted terra cottas to the right of Hygieia (vv. 19-20).⁶

Captivating as these sights are, they are by far surpassed by the marvels that are to be found in the *cella* itself (vv. 56 ff.): here stands the sacred cult statue of the god; here the temple implements are kept.⁷ But no word is uttered about them. Does awe of the divine keep the spectators silent?⁸ Instead, they admire profusely the paintings adorning the walls of the *cella*. One of these pictures shows a procession of men and animals, drawn by Apelles so vividly that in gazing at it one almost forgets that the scenes depicted are not reality: "If I did not think it would be unbecoming for a woman, I should have screamed for fear the ox would do me a hurt: he is looking so sideways at me with one eye" (vv. 69-71). Where the artists were so great that in time they "will be able even to put life into stones" (vv. 33 f.), where works that had "the look of light and life" (v. 68) adorned the sanctuaries, the gods indeed were present in their statues. The visitors, on the other hand, even the common people—for the women are simple folk—, apparently were able to appreciate the beauty of the temples in which they worshipped (vv. 20 f.; 39 f.). They felt the realistic appeal of the world that surrounded them.⁹ Moreover their aesthetic understanding bordered very closely on

⁴ For the other gods who, according to the excavations, were represented in addition, cf. above, p. 216, n. 4. For an archaeological interpretation of the remains, cf. M. Bieber, *Arch. Jahrb.*, XXXVIII-IX, 1923-4, pp. 242 ff.

⁵ This monument is known through copies, cf. O. Crusius-R. Herzog, *Die Mimiamben des Herondas*, 1926, IV, v. 30 and *ibid.*, Table IX.

⁶ Cf. above, p. 215, n. 2.

⁷ Herzog, *Mimiamben*, IV, vv. 56 ff., has rightly pointed out that at this moment the scene of the mime shifts from the outer temple to the *cella*.

⁸ Pausanias, in his description of Epidaurus (T. 739, 2), gives a detailed report on the sacred statue, cf. above, p. 226, referring even to the reliefs carved on the throne on which the god is seated and to the myths there depicted, cf. also T. 632.

⁹ Herzog, *op. cit.*, p. 19, has pointed out that the direct reference to Apelles and the praise of his achievements (vv. 72 ff.) are probably instigated by a contemporary debate

their religious experience. They believed that beauty could not be achieved without divine inspiration. So wonderful are the master-pieces that "you would say [they] were chiselled by Athene herself" (vv. 57 f.). Finally, how familiar everything was to these visitors, with what pride they looked at the treasures of their temple, and yet how little disturbed they were by the magnificence of the great works. With perfect naïveté they placed their simple offerings next to the statues of Timarchus and Cephisodotus; for the temple, in spite of all its grandeur, remained their property and part of their own life.

The women of Herondas' poem stand in the Asclepius temple proper. When the imaginary scene of this reconstruction is now changed from Cos to Epidaurus (T. 739), those who leave the temple with its golden roof and marble pavement through the splendid doors and descend the polished steps,¹⁰ look toward the building where the incubations take place; this, with the exception of the *cella*, is the most important part of the sanctuary. Nearby, another structure catches the eye, the *tholos*.¹¹ It is adorned with the most beautiful paintings: Eros "who has thrown away his bow and arrows, and has picked up a lyre instead," and Drunkenness "drinking out of a crystal goblet; and in the picture you can see the crystal goblet and through it the woman's face."¹²

Next, Pausanias is attracted by the tablets recording the healings of patients. In his time, only six were left on which the names of patients who had been healed, together with the history of their disease, were engraved in the Doric dialect.¹³ One other ancient tablet stands apart: the dedication of Hippolytus. Pausanias singles it out for a more detailed discussion, not only because he delights in telling all that he knows about

concerning the merit of the artist's work in which Herondas wishes to take sides in favor of Apelles. But this does not mean that the women's appreciation of the monuments is beyond their comprehension. Herondas would have been a bad poet indeed had he ascribed to his characters thoughts and judgments which they could not actually pronounce. Emphasis must also be laid on the fact that the description given by Herondas is fashioned according to older models (e.g. Euripides, *Ion*, vv. 184 ff.). Such aesthetic appraisals occur often and reflect a common attitude toward temples and monuments, cf. Herzog, *ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰ These few details are taken from Ovid (T. 850, vv. 671 f.; 685). Some of the shrines were roofless, cf. e.g. T. 761.

¹¹ Concerning the Epidaurian monuments in general, cf. K. A. Neugebauer, *Arch. Jahrb.*, XLI, 1926, pp. 82 ff.; for the *tholos* in particular, cf. F. Noack, *Arch. Jahrb.*, XLII, 1927, pp. 75 ff.

¹² It is interesting that Pausanias was impressed by the realism of the drawings in much the same way as the women of Herondas. He wrote for the average traveller and gave those data which people in general wanted to know. His judgment certainly did not go beyond the common aesthetic understanding. This circumstance makes his report the more important. For a more detailed analysis of Pausanias' description of Epidaurus, cf. C. Robert, *Pausanias als Schriftsteller*, 1909, pp. 111 f.

¹³ These are the inscriptions still preserved (T. 423).

this hero, but also because stories that testify to the participation in mythical deeds of the past were important for the various sanctuaries, for the respect and veneration which they enjoyed.

The incubation hall, the *tholos*, the tablets are found near the temple. But the sacred district extends much farther; it includes many more buildings, older and newer temples mingled with one another. There is a shrine of Artemis, of Aphrodite and Themis, and, built in Pausanias' time by Antoninus, a sanctuary of the gods Bountiful, of Health and Asclepius and Apollo, the Egyptians.

Finally there is a theater, "in my opinion most especially worth seeing. It is true, in splendor the Roman theaters far transcend all the theaters in the world, and in size the theater at Megalopolis in Arcadia is superior; but for symmetry and beauty, what architect could vie with Polyclitus? For it was Polyclitus who made this theater and the round building also."¹⁴ There is a stadium, a fountain "worth seeing for its roof and general splendor." There is a colonnade, restored by Antoninus, and last but not least, there is a bath of Asclepius.¹⁵

What a wealth of buildings and monuments was crowded within the bounds of the sacred grove of the god of medicine! Of course it would be a mistake to imagine that all the sanctuaries of Asclepius were built on as lavish a scale as Cos and Epidaurus and Pergamum, the main seats of the deity. But many places could compete with them, if not in the spaciousness of their layout, at least in the perfection of their design and the beauty of their adornment.¹⁶ To be sure, the artistic genius of the ancients made even the shrine of the least saint delightful to the eye. But such heights as it reached in the great Asclepieia it attained only in the temples of the foremost gods.

¹⁴ The god was much concerned with the way in which his patients passed their leisure. In Epidaurus, gaming tables have been found (cf. Chr. Blinkenberg, *Ath. Mitt.*, XXIII, 1898, pp. 1 ff.). In Pergamum, there was a library for the visitors (cf. O. Deubner, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 ff.).

¹⁵ Sacred springs seem not to have been lacking in any of the sanctuaries of Asclepius; for Pergamum, cf. T. 804; 805, and in general Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 155 ff. Whether this resulted from the fact that incubations were preceded by a bath, or from the old-established belief that water and mantic were closely connected, cannot be decided with certainty; cf. also M. Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten*, *Philol. Suppl.*, XIV, 2, 1921, pp. 47 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, I, p. 89. Colonnades are known from Pergamum too, cf. Deubner, *op. cit.*, p. 23. Incidentally, the colonnade in Epidaurus must have been a two-story building, for Apellas is told to take his walk in the upper portico (T. 432).

¹⁶ Corinth and Ephesus, for instance, seem to have been of extraordinary beauty. Note that even the simpler sanctuaries in small towns or villages were sometimes in possession of artistic masterpieces. Cyllene, "a village of moderate size, has the Asclepius made by Colotes, an ivory image, wonderful to behold" (T. 648).

2. AFFILIATION

Of all the sanctuaries of Asclepius that arose in the course of time, that of Epidaurus, as has been suggested, was the one in which Asclepius was elevated to godhead. If this is correct, one would expect that the other places of worship did not spring up independently, that they had some connection one with another. The ancients thought indeed that most of the temples, the greatest and best known at any rate, were settlements of one center, Epidaurus.

Pausanias, discussing the question of Asclepius' birthplace, declares himself in favor of the Epidaurian claims on the god (T. 709). One reason for his acceptance of the Epidaurian legend is the fact that so many of the temples of Asclepius originated from Epidaurus. In this connection he names Athens, Pergamum, and Balagrae, besides Smyrna and Lebena which were established by Pergamum and Balagrae respectively; in certain other passages he connects Epidaurus with Cos and Epidaurus Limera (T. 757), with Sicyon (T. 748), and with Naupactus (T. 444). Julian agrees with Pausanias' statements: according to him (T. 307), Asclepius appeared first in Epidaurus; from there he went to Pergamum, to all the Ionian temples, and to Cos in particular, to Aegae and to the Italian shrines, Tarentum and Rome. The evidence on which Pausanias and Julian base their assertions is not known.¹ But the reliability of their contentions can be confirmed in some instances: Athens and Rome freely admitted their dependence on Epidaurus (T. 564 f.; 850), a fact that is in favor of the correctness even of those data which cannot be checked. Moreover, in no case can the claims made by Pausanias and Julian be disproved; it is possible even to add more names to their lists: Halieis was founded by Epidaurus (T. 423, 33), Erythrae, Dium, and Ptolemais almost certainly were under Epidaurian influence, if they were not actually settled by Epidaurus.²

The impressiveness of the Epidaurian claim to being the metropolis of the Asclepius cult becomes abundantly clear if the testimonies concerning the Epidaurian origin of certain sanctuaries are compared with those attesting the dependence on other cult centers. One faction of

¹ Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, p. 84, n. 61, thinks that Pausanias' source is Ister; for other theories, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* Mythographie, XVI, p. 1366 f. But all such "Quellenforschung" does not help to decide, whether the statement itself is correct or not.

² Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 225 f.: "Ob die Kulte von Erythrai, Dion und dem oberägyptischen Ptolemais, die dasselbe Kultlied hatten, direkt aus Epidauros stammen, ist fraglich, aber da sie die epidaurischen Göttinnen, sogar die Aigla, aufführen, stehen sie unter epidaurischem Einfluss."

ancient critics asserts that Tricca, not Epidaurus, had the oldest shrine of Asclepius (T. 714). Consequently there should have been at least some influence of Tricca on the foundation of later temples. Yet, the proponents of Tricca are silent concerning any such data. According to the evidence preserved, Tricca is directly related to other places of worship only in two instances: Gerenia in Messenia, Strabo says, had a temple of the Triccaean Asclepius (T. 715), and Herondas mentions that Asclepius came to Cos from Tricca (T. 714b).

Now, as for Gerenia the assertion made can be neither proved nor disproved.³ Concerning Cos, the question arises what Herondas means by saying that Asclepius arrived from Thessaly (T. 714b). Does the poet refer to the hero of physicians, or to the god of medicine? It is most likely that Herondas is thinking of Asclepius, the father of Podalirius from whom the Coan physicians claimed to be descended. For he has just mentioned Heracles and his son, Thessalus, who were Coan heroes, too, and in the Coan legend Asclepius was the son-in-law of Heracles.⁴ That this Asclepius, in the opinion of the Coans, came from Tricca, is quite probable. But the heroic saga does not permit any conclusion concerning the derivation of the Coan temple or of the divine cult.⁵ Nor is it possible to prove the Triccaean origin of the Coan sanctuary simply by referring to the fact that in the prayer of the Coan women Herondas names Tricca first, before Cos and Epidaurus (T. 482, *vv.* 1-2).⁶ For this, if it means anything at all, is counterbalanced by Herondas' claim that Asclepius inhabits Cos and Epidaurus, whereas he rules over Tricca. Certainly, to call a town the dwelling place of a god is a far greater compliment than to put it under his tutelage, and by such arguments one might be induced to quote Herondas as further witness for the Epidaurian

³ Cf. below, pp. 239 f.

⁴ For Asclepius, the forefather of Coan physicians, cf. above, p. 20; for Heracles, cf. Herzog, *Mimiamben*, II, *vv.* 94 ff. Cf. also above, p. 86, n. 42.

⁵ Kjellberg, *Asklepios*, pp. 19 f., claims that the passage in question reflects the opinion of the Alexandrian scholars. It is true that in Herondas' time the scholarly tradition had established Tricca as the birthplace of Asclepius, cf. above, p. 71, but it is unlikely that the figure of the Mimiamb, a brothel-keeper, should advocate the latest results of scholarly research instead of relying on the popular Coan saga. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 257 f., accepts the Thessalian origin of the Coan temple on the evidence of T. 714b; still he maintains an interdependence of the Coan and Epidaurian cults. T. 757 presupposes that the Epidaurians gave the Coans their advice concerning the god; this may best be understood as referring to the transformation of the worship of the hero of physicians into the cult of the god. The prehistoric connection between Thessaly and Epidaurus, which Farnell, *op. cit.*, p. 120, assumes, is a hypothesis which is not very convincing in view of Herodotus' express statement (VII, 99) that the Coan population hailed from Epidaurus.

⁶ Contrary to Herzog, *op. cit.*, IV, v. 2; cf. also *Kos*, p. x.

origin of Cos which is directly attested by other sources. However that may be, Herondas does not expressly say that Cos was settled by Tricca.⁷

The evidence for the Triccaean influence on the establishment of other Asclepius shrines actually consists, then, of one testimony: Strabo's report concerning Gerenia. Maybe some temples in Thessaly were also settled by Tricca; one or the other of the Asclepieia outside that region may have been connected with Tricca, although the sources do not mention this. Generally speaking, it is fair to state that Tricca's importance was locally restricted, that it did in no way equal that of Epidaurus.⁸

Epidaurus, then, was the metropolis of the Asclepius cult. Only in the Peloponnese, and only at a certain time was its position as the stronghold of Asclepius challenged. Messenia had an ancient title to Asclepius through Machaon, and after the restoration of its independence it is likely to have pressed its rights fervently. In the same way, the increasing importance that Arcadia assumed in the political life of the fourth century probably served as an incentive for the Arcadians to insist on their contention that Asclepius was a native of Arcadia.⁹ Although the Delphic Oracle did not waver in its allegiance to Epidaurus and rejected Messenia's pretensions directly and those of Arcadia indirectly, people for quite some time must have been at a loss what to believe. The result of this uncertainty seems to have been a cult like that at Titane. This temple traced its origin to Alexanor, the son of Machaon, the Messenian hero (T. 749), but it had a statue of the Arcadian Asclepius (T. 668c) and agreed with Epidaurus in the acceptance of Coronis as Asclepius' mother (T. 555), and in certain ritualistic rules (T. 510).¹⁰ On the other hand, if, of all places in Messenia, Gerenia which had the tomb of

⁷ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 226, who states that the passage in question does not prove "einen älteren thessalischen Asklepios, der nach Kos gekommen wäre," explains the mention of Tricca before Cos and Epidaurus as a tribute to Homer.

⁸ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 247, thinks that the temples in Thessaly were settled by Tricca. This is not impossible. If Paros and Thera revered the Asclepius of Thessalian Hypata (cf. Farnell, *ibid.*, p. 247a), this would prove the influence of a specific Thessalian cult similar to the influence exercised by other individual temples, cf. below, p. 249, n. 30. That Tricca had only local significance has been pointed out by Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 228.

⁹ Concerning Machaon and Messenia, cf. above, p. 21. For Arcadia, cf. above, pp. 68 f. For the rise of nationalism in that province during the fourth century B. C., cf. Bury, *A History of Greece*, pp. 591 f. For the Messenian temples, cf. T. 768 ff.

¹⁰ Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 249 f., believes that Titane's worship was very old, his only argument being that the cult statue (T. 678) was covered with a chiton. Apart from the fact that this conclusion is not warranted, another statue of the god draped in a chiton is known from Achaia (T. 669, cf. above, p. 217), and this section of Greece certainly had no ancient Asclepius cult, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1666 f. Besides, Messenian influence is impossible before 370 B. C., and the connection with Epidaurus also speaks against a very early temple at Titane. A peculiarity of the cult at Titane was the wild serpent (T. 700a). For the Arcadian temples, cf. T. 772 ff.

Machaon (T. 186; 190) built a sanctuary of the Triccaean Asclepius (T. 767), this disloyalty to the Messenian tradition may have been intended to contribute toward an adjustment of the differences that had arisen. Around 300 B. C. Tricca's claims to Asclepius had found support in the scholarly tradition; even Isyllus, at the very moment when with the approval of Delphi he set up in stone the Epidaurian birth legend of Asclepius, deigned to mention Tricca and its cult.¹¹ Such accommodations were natural as long as Messenia, Arcadia, Epidaurus, and Tricca were still contending for their respective titles to being the birthplace of Asclepius.

But even after the argument had been settled by Delphi in favor of Epidaurus, Arcadia and Messenia extended their influence abroad. Laconia seems to have accepted the Arcadian tradition, and this dependence on Arcadia would in itself suggest that the Laconian temples were of a rather late date. Moreover, the true Spartans of old had hardly much liking for the god of medicine who rose to power because in the opinion of the majority of the Greeks health had replaced glory as the supreme good.¹² But why did the Lacedaemonians follow Arcadia, not Epidaurus? Why did Titane have a cult statue of the Asclepius of Gortys (T. 668c) thus acknowledging its connection with the Arcadian cult, or at least with that of Gortys? Why were certain Argive sanctuaries reputed to have been founded by the children of Machaon (T. 187; 188)? Why did even Argos' most famous Asclepieion, with a cult statue of the second century B. C., trace its origin to Sphyrus, a brother of Alexanor and a son of Machaon, the Messenian (T. 663; 753)?¹³ Why did Epidaurus not succeed in introducing its cult into the adjoining provinces; why was it scorned even by cities that were inhabited by men of the same race? And all this shortly after Epidaurus had won one of its greatest triumphs: Rome had accepted Asclepius from this city in 292 B. C. (T. 846).¹⁴

It seems that it was the political stand taken by the Epidaurians in the time after Alexander's death that made them unpopular with their neigh-

¹¹ Cf. above, pp. 97; 99, n. 32.

¹² Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1669, 3 ff., has suggested that the Laconian temples were dependent on Messenia. But a Messenian influence on Sparta is *a priori* unlikely. Moreover, Arsinoë whom the Lacedaemonians revered as mother of Asclepius must not be the Messenian Arsinoë, as Thraemer says, but may well be the Arcadian Arsinoë, cf. above, p. 69. Finally Machaon was not revered in Sparta, as Thraemer himself admits, and this is quite incomprehensible under the presupposition that Sparta was connected with the Messenian cult of Asclepius. For the Lacedaemonian temples, cf. T. 754-766; for Sparta in particular, cf. Ziehen, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Sparta, VI (2), p. 1471, 18 ff.

¹³ The artists were Xenophilus and Strato, cf. above, p. 218, n. 14.

¹⁴ Cf. below, p. 252.

bors. Isyllus, to be sure, had praised Asclepius as the savior of Sparta and had claimed that the Lacedaemonians agreed with him and paid thanks to the god as their savior from destruction. He had tried to introduce the Spartan political system into the state of Epidaurus.¹⁵ Yet, in the third century B. C. the Epidaurians became staunch supporters of Macedonia, and in the second century B. C. they allied themselves with the Romans; in short, they were always on the side of the enemies of Greece, just as was the Delphic Oracle which favored Epidaurus. Other Greek states still fought on, among them Sparta and Arcadia.¹⁶ That is why dedications of Spartan kings are conspicuously absent from Epidaurus in the third century B. C.; that is why during the second century B. C. Epidaurus lost influence in the Argolid, even though the internal strifes among the Greeks did not impair its world reputation as the birthplace of the son of Apollo and Coronis, as which the city remained famous to the end of antiquity.

But the highest title that Epidaurus could lay on Asclepius did not rest on her merit to have created the god and to have propagated his worship throughout the *oecumene*. It was based on the spiritual heritage that Asclepius had received from his home town, on the pattern which she had established for paying tribute to the god of medicine. Epidaurian ideals remained valid even in countries which were far remote from the center of Greek life. For as in Epidaurus the early temple inscription announced to the pious that in the god's opinion purity consisted in the thinking of holy thoughts (T. 318), so in provincial Africa a late inscription on one of the god's sanctuaries still proclaimed: "Enter a good man, leave a better one" (T. 319).

3. EARLY HISTORY

Definite and outspoken as the testimonies are regarding the dependence of most Asclepius sanctuaries on Epidaurus, they have almost nothing to tell about the time in which the dissemination of the cult took place. From the ancients' views concerning the date of Asclepius' life and that

¹⁵ Cf. above, p. 103.

¹⁶ For the history of Epidaurus in these centuries, cf. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, pp. 123 ff. The Romans, after their conquest of Greece, granted a *foedus* to Epidaurus. Concerning the attitude of the Delphic Oracle toward Macedonia, cf. H. W. Parke, *A History of the Delphic Oracle*, 1939, pp. 244 ff. Up to the time of the Macedonian hegemony Sparta was the dominant power in the Peloponnese, Arcadia her enemy; later, their differences were forgotten in the fight against the common enemy. The earlier enmity between Sparta and Arcadia is a further confirmation of the proposed date of the Laconian cult.

of his deification one can at best surmise that in their opinion the Asclepieia were established shortly before the Trojan War or some time afterwards, generalizations which in their vagueness and incompatibility are not of too much help.¹

When modern scholars first attempted to write the history of the spread of the sanctuaries, they usually assumed—in agreement with their belief that Asclepius was an aboriginal god,—that his temples were as ancient as all the other divine abodes. It was not everywhere, to be sure, that Asclepius had been venerated in the distant past. But Thessaly, and above all Tricca, presumably had very old temples. With the migration of the Greek tribes the god travelled through Greece down to the Peloponnese and even to Asia Minor, where Cos was supposed to have been his earliest place of worship.²

The revolutionary finds of the excavations of the past decades have changed this picture greatly. It has been discovered that the god Asclepius was not revered in Cos until the middle of the fourth century B. C. The temple itself can be traced only to the third century.³ Though other sanctuaries in the colonies were older, the belief that the divine worship in Asia Minor goes back to the time of the Epic or even beyond it, must be given up. As far as Tricca is concerned, one cannot yet pronounce judgment. Up to now it has proved impossible to find the sanctuary.⁴ However, after it has become clear that generally speaking the Asclepius cult is of much later date than had been believed, that the importance of Tricca for the history of the worship is relatively insignificant, one will at least feel less apprehension about the fact that the Triccaean shrine cannot be dated exactly. That it was very ancient, that it was founded long before the other sanctuaries, is a mere hypothesis, and considering the evidence as a whole not even a probable one.

Epidauros, too, used to be considered an ancient seat of Asclepius. Recent excavations have established the fact that it was only at the end of the sixth century B. C. that an altar and a sacred building for Asclepius were erected. The first temple, the famous sanctuary for which Thrasy-medes made his cult statue, was built in the beginning of the fourth century B. C.⁵ If this is so, and if Epidauros, not Tricca, was the place

¹ For the ancient testimony concerning the deification of Asclepius, cf. above, pp. 91 f.

² Cf. e. g. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 101 ff.

³ Cf. Herzog, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos*, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1928, no. 6, p. 48. Cf. also *Kos*, ed. R. Herzog, I, *Asklepieion*, ed. P. Schazmann, 1932. Asclepius was first worshipped in the grove of Apollo, *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ Cf. F. Stählin, *Das hellenische Thessalien*, 1924, p. 119; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 228; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 159.

⁵ Cf. G. Karo, *Weihgeschenke in Epidauros*, 1937, p. 1, n. 4; Kern, *Religion*, III,

where Asclepius became a god, then no shrine of Asclepius ought to antedate the sixth century. The question arises whether the testimonies preserved agree with this dating, and whether the expansion of the cult can be understood under the assumption that it originated that late.

Now with the exception of Epidaurus there are certainly no indications of any divine worship earlier than the end of the sixth century B. C. Even for the fifth century the evidence for the cult is of the scantiest.⁶ To begin with Greece proper and more specifically, with the Peloponnese: Sicyon in the Argolid had a temple of Asclepius with a cult statue which was ascribed to Calamis (T. 649). Consequently, the sanctuary should be dated around the middle of the fifth century B. C., at least if it is the older Calamis who is referred to. If it was the younger artist of this name who made the statue, the temple would have been founded around 400 B. C.⁷ Beyond the Argolid, in Mantinea in Arcadia, Pausanias saw a temple, half of which was dedicated to Leto and her children, the other half to Asclepius. The statue of the latter he describes as the "art of Alcamenes" (T. 647), while the pictures of Leto and her children, he adds, were made by Praxiteles, three generations later. According to Pausanias, then, this Asclepius image should be traced to the middle of the fifth century B. C.; according to the modern dating of Alcamenes it would be rather the end of the fifth century B. C.⁸ At any rate, the

p. 155; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 227. The Epidaurian inscription which records the expenses for the building of the temple and which is of great importance for a study of the time and circumstances of its construction, has been discussed in part by Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 274 ff.

⁶ I do not wish to minimize the uncertainties and difficulties involved in this survey. Only in a few instances can the founding of shrines be deduced from direct evidence, and the means of filling the gaps of tradition are rather limited. Sometimes the date of one sanctuary can be determined by its dependence on another, whose time of establishment is known. Moreover, those cult statues which can be traced to certain artists indicate the period in which the sanctuaries themselves which they adorned were founded. Especially as regards a relatively late cult, it is a fair assumption that the creation of the divine image coincided with the building of the temple. Thraemer, Farnell and Wilamowitz, therefore, have rightly made use of such artistic data for the history of the Asclepius shrines. It is true, an argument based on such evidence is not absolutely cogent; it is possible that a new temple or a new statue replaced older monuments. Yet while the conclusions that have been drawn do not carry much weight so long as they are isolated or contradictory, they gain force if taken together and found to be in agreement with one another.

⁷ Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 224, says simply: "[Sicyon] einige Jahrzehnte früher (sc., than Athens; cf. below, p. 245), die Zeit ergibt sich daraus, dass Kalamis das Kultbild machte." He does not consider the fact that two artists are known by that name; cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 201 ff., esp. p. 202, n. 64. That the temple at Sicyon was founded after 500 B. C. is certain; for its Epidaurian dependence is claimed (T. 748); cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 36 f. Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1665, 34 ff., is not justified in doubting this tradition. Hiller, *I. G.*, IV², 1, *Prolegomena*, p. xv a, ll. 46 ff., dates the temple after 480 B. C. For Sicyon cf. also T. 747.

⁸ For Alcamenes, cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 236. It is hard to imagine that in a sanctuary

Mantinean temple was not established before the second half of the fifth century. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Asclepius here was still worshipped together with other deities, rather than independently.⁹ In Elis, Cyllene had a temple of the god which contained a statue by Colotes (T. 779; 648). If the artist was the elder Colotes, the temple would have been founded in the middle of the fifth century B. C.; if he was the younger artist of the same name, the cult statue would have been created considerably later. It is impossible to decide with certainty between these two possibilities.¹⁰

Outside the Peloponnese, in the Saronian gulf, Aegina possessed a building or a temple sacred to Asclepius as early as 422 B. C. Here, the god took care of his patients in their sleep, as can be gathered from the *Wasps* of Aristophanes (T. 733).¹¹ In 420 the god came to Athens (T.

that was divided into two sections only by a partition, the cult statues in each part should have been made at different times, and it is a fair conclusion that the Praxiteles referred to here was actually the elder Praxiteles, who seems to have been a contemporary of Alcamenes. For the elder Praxiteles, cf. Richter, *ibid.*, p. 266.

⁹ A *terminus post quem* for the temple in Mantinea is afforded by the fact that that city was founded in the second half of the sixth century, before the Persian wars (cf. K. J. Beloch, *Griech. Gesch.*, I, 1, 1912, p. 335). The Argives took part in the settlement of Mantinea; this makes Epidaurian influence quite possible. Interestingly enough, Tegea, founded at the same time as Mantinea (cf. Beloch, *loc. cit.*), had strong trade-relations with Argos; one of the Epidaurian miracles (no. 47) deals with a man bringing fish from Argos to Tegea—a famous trade, as is clear from Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1365 a 27; cf. Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, pp. 136 ff. The only Asclepius temple of uncertain date that is attested for Tegea, lies on the road to Argos (T. 772). The Tegean reputation of Asclepius, then, may well have been influenced also by Epidaurus, and it seems justifiable to stress the fact that Mantinea and Tegea were relatively recent foundations through *συννοικισμός* and therefore certainly more inclined to adopt new gods than were cities of old standing.

¹⁰ Archaeologists seem to have no doubt that the Colotes referred to by Strabo is the elder artist (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XI, p. 1123, 22 ff.). It should be noted, however, that the statue was made of ivory alone, not of ivory and gold, a technique for which the elder Colotes was famous (in Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, the statue is listed among the "Goldelfenbeinwerke," contrary to Strabo, the only source). That the sacred table in the Heraeum at Olympia, which showed Asclepius and Hygieia (T. 641) and which was likewise made by Colotes, was not the work of the elder but rather of the younger artist is attested by Pausanias who, as he says, relies on other art critics. I see no reason to question his attribution (cf. however Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, p. 1123, 7 ff.; 67 ff.). At any rate, from this monument nothing can be concluded about the date of the Asclepius in Elis (contrary to Thraemer, Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1667, 18 ff.). Among the dedications of Micythus at Olympia (T. 642) there were Asclepius and Hygieia. These monuments by the artist Dionysius were erected after Micythus had come to Tegea, that is, some time after 467; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Dionysios, V, p. 999, 53 ff. That Asclepius was represented here as patron of the games, as Thraemer has claimed (Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1667, 22), is unlikely, since the occasion for the offering was the disease of Micythus' son.

¹¹ The *Wasps*, where the incubation in Aegina is mentioned, was performed in 422. The sanctuary may of course have been older; but the fact that Aegina was once in the possession of Epidaurus, from which it became independent at an unknown date (cf. Beloch, *op. cit.*, I, 1, p. 330, n. 1), suggests that the cult in Aegina was no more ancient than that of Epidaurus, and probably connected with the latter; cf. above, p. 208, n. 3.

720 ff.). He resided at first in the sanctuary of the Eleusinian goddesses, then probably in the shrine of another healing hero, until finally, in the year 420-19 B. C., he could take up residence in his own temple. In 408 another sanctuary had been established for him in the harbor of the city.¹² In Middle Greece in the fifth century B. C. the god was honored with a sacred district in Delphi. The Oracle accepted the son of Apollo within the holy city of his father.¹³ In Northern Greece, Larissa in Thessaly may have had a sanctuary of Asclepius in the second half of the fifth century. Whether other places in this region had a cult of the god at that time, cannot be ascertained.¹⁴

In the fourth century Asclepius increased his hold over the Argolid and the Peloponnese. Halieis was founded (T. 423, 33). Troizen was established, its cult statue being the work of Timotheus (T. 654); for Megara, Bryaxis created a likeness of Asclepius (T. 656).¹⁵ The sanctuary of Corinth (T. 745) was founded. Here, the son of Apollo took over a temple where previously his father had been venerated.¹⁶ When in 369

¹² Cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 223; his previous assumption (*Isyllos*, p. 83) that the Athenian cult was introduced around 460 was refuted by inscriptions that were found later. Concerning the Asclepius cult in Athens and its history, cf. Kutsch, *Attische Heilgötter*, pp. 16 ff.; also Walton, *Harvard Studies in Class. Phil.*, XLVI, 1935, pp. 172 ff. Eleusis, too, seems to have had an Asclepius sanctuary at the end of the fifth century; cf. Kern, *Religion*, II, pp. 314 f.

¹³ Concerning Delphi and the excavations through which the holy district of Asclepius was discovered, cf. Pomtow, Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. IV, s. v. Delphoi, pp. 1361, 18 ff.; especially p. 1362, 60 ff.

¹⁴ Farnell, *op. cit.*, p. 247 a. Coins from Larissa between 450 and 400 B. C. show Asclepius feeding a serpent. Farnell, *ibid.*, p. 247, says: "Other communities in Thessaly had adopted him (*sc.*, Asclepius), at least as early as the fifth century." The only evidence adduced, however, is the coin from Larissa, *Brit. Mus. Cat., Thessaly*, p. 28, pl. V, 9.

¹⁵ Halieis is mentioned on the Epidaurian tablets (T. 423, 33). The episode related here may have occurred earlier, yet the temple at Halieis was certainly later than that of Epidaurus by which it was founded; cf. also Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 36. For the date of Timotheus, cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 274 f. Troizen is also mentioned in T. 423, 23; since the god of Epidaurus took care of patients in Troizen, the latter place seems to have been connected with Epidaurus. For the date of Bryaxis, cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 279 f. For other Argive temples, cf. T. 750 ff.

¹⁶ The Corinthian temple has been excavated, and F. J. de Waele, *Am. Journ. Arch.*, XXXVII, 1933, p. 421, has claimed that "beyond any doubt there was a small temple dedicated to Asklepios and Hygieia in the second half of the sixth century B. C." But as de Waele himself says, in the earliest deposit of potteries on which the proposed dating depends, no votive offerings of limbs were found; the oldest dedication is one to Apollo, *ibid.*, p. 420. That even the archaic temple was sacred to Asclepius is concluded only from the fact that an Asclepius sanctuary was built here in the fourth century (pp. 424 ff.), yet it happened very often that Asclepius replaced Apollo, cf. *e. g.* Cos, above, p. 243, n. 3. De Waele adds that the Asclepius cult had migrated "possibly in the Greek Middle Ages" to the Peloponnese (p. 421), and that Titane also had an old temple. Such an argument, however, begs the question; it is not known that such a migration took place, nor had Titane an archaic sanctuary (cf. above, p. 240). Influence of an old Thracian Asclepius of which de Waele speaks elsewhere (Pauly-Wissowa,

Messenia regained her independence, Asclepius and his sons were pictured among the heroes (T. 657) whom the city of Messene called back to their abode after its restoration.¹⁷ In Arcadia, the famous temple of Gortys was built at about the same time; here, the statue of the god was made by Scopas (T. 774; 652).¹⁸

As for other sections of Greece, in the first part of the fourth century B. C. Euboea had a temple of the god of medicine and honored him with a procession (T. 787). Around 300 B. C. the Asclepius cult reached Locris: the shrine at Naupactus was founded at that time (T. 717).¹⁹ Not much later Asclepius may have been accepted even in Epirus. Ambracia had a famous temple of the god; when the Romans captured Ambracia (T. 716), monuments from that sanctuary were taken to Rome.²⁰ Finally, in Thessaly, Tricca in the fourth century must have been famous for its Asclepieion, and other Thessalian sanctuaries may have flourished at that time.²¹

This much can be ferreted out about the Asclepieia in Greece proper during the classical period. Granted that the information available at times is ambiguous, that the conclusions drawn in some instances may be open to objection, it seems certain that none of the shrines, with the exception of the altar and *abaton* at Epidaurus, can be traced beyond 500 B. C. Even for the fifth century, the earliest for which an Asclepius worship outside of Epidaurus can be proved at all, the data are few that

Suppl. VI, *s.v.* Korinthus, p. 195, 58), is again a merely hypothetical supposition. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 249, had assumed an old temple at Corinth because of a bronze statuette dedicated to Asclepius and inscribed "in letters that point to one or the other of those two communities (*sc.* Corinth or Megara), and which may be dated near 500 B. C." This monument is certainly not sufficient proof for a temple, either in Megara or Corinth.

¹⁷ The picture was painted by Omphalion who lived at the end of the fourth century B. C., cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XVIII, p. 398, 55 ff. For the Asclepieia at Messene, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XV, p. 1241, 18 ff.

¹⁸ Concerning Messenia and Arcadia in general and their influence around 300, cf. above, pp. 240 ff. For Scopas, cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 267 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. Oldfather, Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Naupaktos, XVI, p. 1999, 41 ff. The date follows from the lifetime of the founder of the temple and that of the other persons involved in the story told by Pausanias (T. 444). Oldfather rightly rejects the claim that the cult must have been older, adding that it is only natural "dass in eine ziemlich entlegene Stadt der ohnehin recht neue Kult des Asklepios aus Epidaurus relativ spät . . . eindringt." Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 38, puts the foundation of the temple around 320 B. C.

²⁰ Ambracia had a period of great prosperity under Pyrrhus who adorned the city with many monuments (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v.* Ambracia, I, p. 1806, 35 ff.). Here, as in the case of Naupactus, it can hardly be assumed that the Asclepius cult came to a city on the outskirts of the motherland long before Pyrrhus' reign.

²¹ Triccaean coins of the fourth century show the head of Asclepius; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1662, 54. Around 300 Isyllus refers to the worship at Tricca (T. 516). For the Thessalian temples in general, cf. Stählin, *Das hellen. Thessalien*, *passim*.

attest a shrine of the god of medicine. This scarcity of material is the more noteworthy since for the same period innumerable temples of other deities are attested.

The expansion of the Asclepius cult was most extensive in the Peloponnese. Thessaly, too, seems to have had a number of sanctuaries. In both regions claims were made on Asclepius as one of their citizens. In Middle Greece, the cult made only small inroads. Testimonies from Boeotia are entirely missing. Small wonder! Boeotia had its own hero, Trophonius, so similar to Asclepius, and at the border of Attica and Boeotia there was Amphiaraus, who was also famous for his medical wisdom.²² People are wont to adhere to their gods and do not like to give up allegiance to those in whom they trust in favor of a stranger. In Phocis, too, despite Delphi's acceptance of Asclepius, the god seems to have made but slow progress. The fact that it was here that Asclepius had been revered as the "leader of medicine" may have impeded the success of the Epidaurian god.²³ Generally speaking, the spread of the cult in the motherland confirms the assumption that it was from one place, Epidaurus, and at a rather late date that Asclepius began to conquer the Greek territory.²⁴

To turn now to a consideration of the world outside the Greek mainland: here too, one can say with assurance, no Asclepieion is known before the fifth century B. C. Balagrae in Cyrene (T. 709; 831) used to be dated at the end of the sixth century. But it is more likely that it was founded in the fifth century; at any rate, it was a settlement of Epidaurus.²⁵ Nor are any temples of Asclepius attested in Asia Minor that

²² Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 247, maintains that "at some indefinitely earlier date" (that is, before the fifth century) the worship "was carried into Boeotia." Yet he admits that "none of the records of an Asklepios-cult are ancient enough to serve as telling evidence" for his thesis. For Boeotia, cf. also Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1663, 54 ff.

²³ Concerning Asclepius *Archegetes*, cf. above, p. 96. The temple at Tithorea (T. 719) cannot be dated. The fact that no goats were sacrificed there, just as at Epidaurus (T. 532 f.), speaks for an Epidaurian affiliation; it is possible that the Tithoreans changed their ancient worship when at the end of the fourth century they rebuilt their town which had been destroyed during the Holy War. To explain the ritual through a birth legend similar to that of Epidaurus (Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1664, 18) seems unwarranted, since nothing is known about an Asclepius who was supposed to have been born in Phocis. Other temples in this region may have been of even later origin. The cult statue at Elateia was made by Timocles and Timarchides (T. 662; 718), artists of the second century B. C.; cf. Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

²⁴ In this survey not all sections of Greece have been considered, partly because in certain regions no Asclepieia are known, partly because they were of a much later date. For Acarnania, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1664, 35 ff.; Illyria, *ibid.*, 50 ff.; Achaia, *op. cit.*, p. 1666, 64 ff., and T. 782 ff.

²⁵ The temple at Balagrae has not yet been found. Cf. Wilamowitz, *Kyrene*, 1928, p. 18, n. 1. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 263, assumed that it was founded before 500, because

precede the one at Epidaurus. Even Cos, contrary to the assumptions formerly made by scholars, was established at a much later date.²⁶ It was in fact only in the first half of the fourth century that the god was admitted to the colonies. Erythrae received him at that time (T. 521; 592);²⁷ Pergamum was founded not long afterwards. It must have been around 350 that Archias brought the cult to that city (T. 801), and very shortly thereafter Ephesus (T. 573) built a sanctuary of Asclepius which remained famous throughout antiquity.²⁸ With the beginning of the third century the influence of the god over Asia Minor became consolidated through the dedication of the temple at Cos (T. 794 ff.), which replaced an altar erected to Asclepius in the grove of Apollo around 350 B. C. The worship paid to the hero Asclepius by the famous physicians of Cos probably retarded the recognition of the god.

Finally, as regards the Greek possessions in the Mediterranean, it was only at the turn of the fifth to the fourth century that they were reached by the divine cult,²⁹ which from then on seems to have spread rapidly in all directions. Far to the North, Thasos possessed a sanctuary around 380. Its priest is mentioned in an inscription (T. 786). On the Cyclades, the Asclepieion of Delos must have been founded in the fourth century, for a long and detailed document of the year 279 refers to the repair work done on that temple (T. 788). An inscription of Paros mentions sacrifices to Asclepius (T. 789). In the West, the cult took root in Sicily. The Syracusans had a temple adorned with a statue of the Epidaurian god (T. 683).³⁰ From the third century on the isles in the Aegean sea, small and large, were studded with temples of Asclepius. Moreover, in Crete a sanctuary was built that was to become a main center of the worship: Lebena (T. 791) rose under the influence of Cyrene.³¹

in his opinion Lebena, a foundation of Balagrae, was established in the fifth century. Excavations at Lebena have proved, however, that that temple belongs in the third century; cf. below, n. 31.

²⁶ Cf. above, p. 243.

²⁷ Cf. Wilamowitz, *Nordionische Steine*, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1909, No. 2, p. 43; Farnell, *Hero Cults*, pp. 263 f. For the influence of Epidaurus on Erythrae, cf. above, p. 238.

²⁸ For Pergamum, cf. Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, p. 225, n. 2; Herzog, *Wunderheilungen*, p. 38; for Ephesus, J. Keil, *Jahresh. d. Oest. Arch. Inst.*, XXIII, 1926, pp. 263 f.

²⁹ Cf. Farnell, *Hero Cults*, p. 263.

³⁰ Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1679, 31 ff. Thraemer rightly concludes that Syracuse was dependent on Epidaurus because it had a statue of the Epidaurian Asclepius; in the same way, expressions such as the Gortynian Asclepius (T. 668 c), or the Tricraean Asclepius (T. 767), point to an influence of these respective cities on other temples. Thraemer, *ibid.*, p. 1676, 63 ff., by mistake speaks of an Asclepieion at Agrigentum in 491 B. C.; the year referred to in T. 839 is 491 *ab urbe condita* (263 B. C.). For Acragas, cf. P. Marconi, *Agrigento*, 1929, p. 87.

³¹ Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl., VII, p. 369, 16 ff., where Kirsten rightly rejects the earlier assumption that Lebena was founded in the fifth century. The first buildings

The progress of Asclepius outside Greece, then, like his progress on the mainland, was a slow conquering of single positions. Perhaps the god in the overseas possessions faced fewer difficulties and proceeded more quickly. This would not be surprising. The religious life of Asia Minor certainly was not as conservative and hostile to innovations as was that of the cities of the old country.³² That the isles were especially rich in temples one can well understand too. The worship of Asclepius seems soon to have become popular with seafaring people; to a certain extent the spread of the Asclepius cult followed the ancient trade routes. Many of the early temples were situated in harbors or in coastal towns, at the point of departure or the port of destination.³³ Separated as the sailors were from their homes and their gods, they were all the more inclined to put themselves under the tutelage of a new deity who seemed anxious and able to protect them. Moreover, among those engaged in navigation the need for divine medical help was great. Overseas commerce was a dangerous undertaking, threatened by disease no less than by piracy and the perils of the elements. Sickness, when it befell men on the high seas, was even more dreadful than at home, for the sailor's safety depended on his being well and fully in command of his physical strength. And who could help, if not a god, since their ships hardly carried along sufficient medical supplies and certainly had no doctor on board?³⁴ Thus one will readily believe that seamen starting on their voyage prayed to Asclepius as well as to Poseidon, and that they thanked both deities after they had landed safely. The islands were stop-overs on long trips, and Asclepius, it seems, was brought there by the sailors who had adopted him as their patron. But whatever the forces instrumental in the expansion of the cult beyond Greece, this much is certain: here, too, no worship can be detected that antedates that of Epidaurus. The early history of the temples does not contradict, it rather confirms the assumption that Asclepius was elevated to godhead by the Epidaurians.

actually dedicated to Asclepius can be traced only to the third century B. C. The older buildings may have been dedicated to Apollo; Asclepius often superseded his father, cf. above, p. 243, n. 3. For the islands, cf. T. 790; 793, and Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1670, 9 ff.

³² In this connection it should be remembered that Tegea and Mantinea, which had early temples of Asclepius, both were new settlements, cf. above, p. 245, n. 9.

³³ Temples located in harbors were those of the Piraeus (T. 722), Cenchreae (T. 746); Cyllene, where a relatively old Asclepieion is attested (T. 779), was an important trade center, just as Aegina, which also had received the god in the fifth century (T. 733), was a large trading place connected with Cyllene.

³⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, XIV, 250 ff., especially 255, expresses the characteristic attitude of the ancients toward sailing and its risks. Cf. also Hippocrates, *On Regimen*, III, 68 (VI, p. 594 L.). For Asclepius as helper in distress at sea, cf. above, p. 104, n. 13.

4. HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN TIMES

With the Hellenistic era began the period of the ascendancy of the Asclepius cult. The god became universally recognized. All major cities now had temples of the god of medicine; the country towns worshipped the famous son of Apollo. Kings and commoners, philosophers and business men alike invoked Asclepius. In the early Roman Empire, the Asclepieia were hardly less numerous than the sanctuaries of the other great Greek gods. Hundreds of temples are still known.¹ Until the end of the second century A. D. the influence of Asclepius increased steadily. Within the framework of this survey it is impossible to deal in detail with the development that took place during these five hundred years. Nor would such an analysis be of advantage for the evaluation of the cult as a whole.² There are, however, certain facts of general interest that stand out and deserve consideration.

First, it should be pointed out that Alexander the Great was a devotee of Asclepius, and of the Epidaurian god in particular.³ The king celebrated Asclepius with offerings (T. 548) and with festivals (T. 547), he made dedications at Epidaurus (T. 821). It must have impressed the people at large that the greatest hero, the conqueror of the world, had sought Asclepius' advice and help. Many a patient may have consoled himself with the knowledge that even Alexander did not secure from the deity everything for which he had asked. And the private citizen too, even if he felt neglected by the god, may have made pious offerings, as Alexander had chosen to do; for it was only untrustworthy authors who asserted that the king in revenge of the god's failure to help, had destroyed the sacred temple (T. 827; 713). More important, to his successors, who were so intent on imitating his deeds, Alexander's example must have been a stimulus to further the cult of Asclepius. The early foundation of the sanctuary at the Egyptian Ptolemais (T. 513a) is ample proof

¹ Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, pp. 1662-1677, where Thraemer lists 186 sanctuaries. In *E. R. E.*, VI, p. 550, he speaks of 410. A survey of the temples is also given by Walton, *Cult of Asklepios*, pp. 95 ff., yet this enumeration is not absolutely reliable (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *ibid.*, p. 1677, 21), and is now of course antiquated.

² The evidence available for the various parts of the ancient world has been considered in books on the cults of certain sections of Greece or of the several provinces of the Roman Empire, cf. e. g. W. Immerwahr, *Die Kulte u. Mythen Arkadiens*, I, 1891; S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte*, 1893; cf. also below, n. 10.

³ Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 47 f., seems the only one to have noted Alexander's relation to Asclepius. Whether the data given in the testimonies are reliable in every detail, it is difficult to tell. Yet one cannot fail to attribute a certain significance to the fact that Alexander was connected with Asclepius by the tradition.

of this attitude on the part of the Diadochi.⁴ Especially in the eastern part of the world, the fame of Asclepius doubtless owed much to the support of Alexander.

The rise of the Asclepius worship in the East, however, was not limited to the acceptance of the Greek cult. The identification of the god with Oriental deities was another form of recognition paid to him. In Egypt, the son of Coronis became Imouthes or Imhotep; his sanctuaries in Memphis and Thebes were especially famous (T. 331; 827 ff.).⁵ In Phoenicia, he became Esmoun, and in the guise of this god he even acquired a new genealogy (T. 826). In fact, the Phoenician Asclepius later was so highly respected that a man from Sidon could dispute with Pausanias about the true nature of the god, and claim that the Phoenicians had more adequate notions concerning him than had the Greeks (T. 297).⁶ When this process of assimilation set in, can hardly be determined with exactness. The fact that Asclepius was identified with the main deity of the Carthaginians (T. 832 ff.) indicates at least that it did not take long before he was received even by the Semitic people.⁷

For the ascendancy of the god in the West, on the other hand, it was decisive that Asclepius was among the first foreign gods to be admitted in Rome. His temple was dedicated as early as 291 B. C. (T. 855). In its importance this event may be compared only with the entry of Asclepius into Athens.⁸ It set a pattern for the attitude of Roman citizens and

⁴For the Ptolemaic shrine, cf. W. Otto, *Priester und Tempel im Hellenistischen Ägypten*, I, 1905, p. 395. For Alexandria, cf. E. Visser, *Götter u. Kulte im ptolemaischen Alexandria*, 1938, pp. 39 f.

⁵Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1680, 13 ff.; above, p. 129, n. 15.

⁶As Esmoun, Asclepius was revered in Berytus (T. 825 ff.); between that city and Sidon he had a sacred grove (T. 823). Another Phoenician Asclepius was the one of Ascalon, called Leontouchos (T. 826a); cf. Pauly-Wissowa, XII, p. 2057, 20 ff. On Phoenician coins, Asclepius is represented "im Typus griechischer Kunst"; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, II, p. 1679, 65.

⁷In general, cf. F. Cumont, Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. Eshmun, VI, pp. 677. For Asclepius in New Carthage, cf. T. 838. The Orientalization of the god was reflected even in the late Greek concept of Asclepius. Certain features were due to foreign influence: the Egyptian shoes of the priest in Pergamum (T. 493), and more important, the temple in Epidaurus that was dedicated to Hygieia, Apollo and Asclepius, surnamed the Egyptians (T. 739, 6). But despite such Oriental touches, the Asclepius cult remained essentially Greek, and particularly Epidaurian; cf. above, p. 242.

⁸For Rome, cf. T. 845 ff. The Romans went to Epidaurus at the instigation of the Delphic Oracle (T. 850, vv. 631 ff.). The question of the transfer of the cult to Rome is complicated by the fact that two Roman sanctuaries seem to be referred to in T. 860, and it has therefore been assumed that the city had a shrine even before 291 B. C.; cf. Wissowa, *Kultus u. Religion*, p. 307, n. 7. Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 121, n. 2, has pointed out that the Roman transliteration of the name Asclepius presupposes a spelling no longer used in the Epidaurus of the third century; cf. also Deubner, *Die Römer*, p. 462. Yet, this may be explained perhaps by the fact that the god was known in Rome even before his temple was founded. Concerning the sanctuary on the Tiber Island,

officials of later centuries. The Asclepius whom they found in Greece or in the Orient was one of the gods whom their city had made its own, and consequently he was certain to enjoy their favor. The emperors continued this policy.⁹ Yet, most of all it was the Roman soldiers who contributed to the extension of Asclepius' reign. They took him to all the regions that came under Roman domination, to the farthest corners of the empire, to the ends of the inhabited world. The *Aesculapius castrorum* was the one who was received by the barbarian countries; the mild god, the friend of men, was brought to them by the conquering legions.¹⁰

Asclepius' world-wide reputation, however, should not obscure the fact that his old Greek sanctuaries still remained his strongholds, the places on which his fame rested most securely. They, too, profited by the steadily increasing reverence paid to the god. Epidaurus from the beginning had been intent on making its shrine a fane of Greece.¹¹ When the magnificent temple of the fourth century had been finished (T. 735 ff.) patients gathered from everywhere; there never was a dearth of sacrifices for Asclepius. Because the altar of the god was continually stained with blood, Epidaurus was called *Haimera* (T. 483). In spite of its unpopular political attitude, Epidaurus did not lose worshippers even in the third and second centuries, as is attested by the inscriptions. Aemilius Paulus, when visiting Epidaurus in 167 B. C., found it rich in offerings (T. 383). And although the Roman notables of the Republic did not show much interest in Epidaurus, although its monuments were carried away by Sulla (T. 743), although the sanctuary was plundered by pirates (T. 744), and although only a few benefactors of the shrine are known between 100 B. C. and 100 A. D., Strabo expressly says that the temple was always

cf. M. Besnier, *L'Ile Tibérine dans l'Antiquité*, 1902; Kern, *Religion*, III, p. 156. The late temple in the Thermae of Diocletian has been discussed by H. Jordan, *Commentationes Philolagae in honorem Th. Mommseni*, 1877, p. 356. The Roman inscriptions that are extant are printed as T. 438. Julian claims that Tarentum was founded before Rome (T. 843), an assumption that can neither be proved nor disproved. A temple in Antium is attested for the second century B. C. (T. 844), another one in Croton is referred to in T. 842.

⁹ Cf. below, p. 254.

¹⁰ Cf. in general A. v. Domaszewski, *Die Religion des römischen Heeres*, *Westd. Zeitschr. f. Gesch. u. Kunst.*, XIV, 1895; Wissowa, *Religion u. Kultus*, p. 309. The religious movement in the late centuries has not yet been studied in its entirety. I list a few works which give information on Asclepius in the various provinces of the Roman empire: *Dacia*, L. W. Jones, *Univ. of Calif. Public.*, IX, 1929, pp. 245 ff.; 268 ff.; *N. Igna, Cultu lui Esculap i al Higei*, 1935; *Germania*, F. Drexel, *Die Götterverehrung im römischen Germanien*, 4. Bericht der röm.-germ. Kommission, 1922, pp. 1-68; *Helvetia*, O. Stähelin, *Die Schweiz in römischer Zeit*, 1927; *Illyria*, Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. V, p. 337, 27 ff.; *Thracia*, Pauly-Wissowa, VI (2), p. 495, 62 ff. (*Moesia*, *ibid.*, p. 500, 23 ff.).

¹¹ Concerning the history of Epidaurus, cf. Hiller v. Gaertringen, *I. G.*, IV², 1, Prolegomena, pp. IX ff.; Latte, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 155 f.

filled with patients even in his own time (T. 382).¹² In the second century A. D. the Emperor Hadrian seems to have favored Epidaurus more than any other place. The senator Antoninus rebuilt the sanctuary and adorned it with magnificent monuments (T. 739, 6).¹³

The importance of Epidaurus at the end of the third century B. C. was challenged by Cos. The newly-founded temple rose quickly to a place of prominence. Even a Syrian king deigned to make a dedication to the Coan Asclepius (T. 796). Caesar upheld its sanctity (T. 797), a fact which certainly was of great consequence. The Coans themselves had shown that they respected the holiness of the place by not handing over to Mithridates the Romans who had sought refuge in the sanctuary (T. 798). Strabo calls the shrine very famous (T. 794). Tiberius recognized anew its right of asylum (T. 798). Claudius granted special honors to Cos (T. 799). When in the second century an earthquake damaged the sanctuary, help was given by Antoninus Pius for rebuilding the shrine.¹⁴

While Cos suffered severely from the damage inflicted upon it by the blind forces of nature, Pergamum had reached the pinnacle of its fame. Founded in the fourth century B. C., it added new buildings in the second. But during the same period, the temple was ravaged by Prusias (T. 802). The anti-Roman stand taken by the city in the first century—the Pergamenes failed to protect the Romans who had fled to the sanctuary before Mithridates (T. 809)—probably did much harm to the reputation of the shrine. However, it recovered quickly. Under the reign of Antoninus Pius the new temple of Asclepius Zeus was built by Rufinus (T. 803).¹⁵

¹² Cf. Latte, *op. cit.*, pp. 127 ff.; he fails to mention Strabo, but concludes from the scarcity of inscriptions between 100 B. C. and 100 A. D. that the temple must have lost in importance. Livy says that Epidaurus is "now rich in traces of broken votives" (T. 383).

¹³ Hadrian dedicated a bust of Epictetus in the temple; cf. *I. G.* IV², 1, no. 683, and Chr. Blinkenberg, *Nord. Tidsskrift for filologi*, III, 1894-5, p. 157. Concerning Antoninus, cf. Hiller v. Gaertringen, *Hermes*, LXIV, 1929, pp. 63 ff.

¹⁴ For the history of Cos, cf. W. R. Paton and E. L. Hicks, *The Inscriptions of Cos*, 1891, pp. ix ff.; R. Herzog and P. Schazmann, *Kos*, I, *Asklepieion*, 1932, pp. IX ff. The inscriptions of Cos have not yet been published in full, but cf. Paton and Hicks, *loc. cit.*; A. Maiuri, *Nuova Silloge epigraphica di Rodi e Co*, 1925; R. Herzog, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos*, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1926, no. 6. Claudius' help for the Coan sanctuary, which was instigated by his personal relation to Xenophon of Cos, his physician, was also motivated by the emperor's recognition of Cos as the birthplace of Hippocrates; cf. Herzog, *Hist. Zeitschr.*, CXXV, 1921, pp. 216 ff.

¹⁵ In general, cf. Th. Wiegand, *Zweiter Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Pergamon*, 1928-32, *Abh. Berl. Akad.*, 1932, n. 5; Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, II, pp. 506 ff.; Kern, *Religion*, III, pp. 157 ff.; O. Deubner, *Das Asklepieion von Pergamon*, 1938. A selection of the inscriptions from Pergamum is to be found in M. Fränkel, *Die Inschriften von Pergamon*, I-II, 1890-95. On the temple of Rufinus, cf. H. Hepding, *Philologus*, LXXXVIII, 1933, pp. 90 ff.; 241 ff.

Pergamum, in the opinion of Aristides, was the hearth of the god (T. 402). The whole island of Cos was sacred to him (T. 795). Epidaurus was his holy city (T. 400). Throughout the centuries the Greek sanctuaries remained the focus of the worship, even after Asclepius had conquered Orient and Occident.

5. THE CHRISTIAN ERA

The authority of the Asclepius temples was at its zenith when in the second century Christianity had grown from a small and unimportant sect that was anxious to live undisturbed by others into a proselytizing mass movement threatening to destroy the foundations of ancient religious life. Not only did the Christians face in Asclepius the god who had so much in common with their Savior; ¹ the actual power of the god of medicine was highly dangerous to the new religion. To be sure, all the Greek gods were still worshipped. But, as Aristides testifies, in his time even in Rome it was Asclepius who had gained the most in his hold over men; of all Greek deities his fame alone had risen in equal measure with that of the Egyptian gods, who now came more and more to the fore, although they had not yet found the same legal recognition which was accorded to other foreign cults adopted by the state.² Small wonder that the Apologists denounced Asclepius so bitterly! However, the Asclepieia still proved impregnable to attack.

The situation changed somewhat during the third century A. D. In certain sections at least Christianity began to make inroads on Asclepius himself lost in power. Pergamum, destroyed by an earthquake between 253 and 260 A. D., was not rebuilt. Were no means available for a reconstruction, did nobody care what happened to the shrine? Soon the site was used as a graveyard.³ But the other temples stood fast. In Epidaurus, new altars rose; Eleusinian priests administered the priesthood of Asclepius.⁴ On the whole, the god held his own. Nay, the

¹ Cf. above, pp. 132 ff.

² Aristides (*Oratio*, XXVI, 105, p. 122, 23 f. K.) in reviewing the significance which the various gods had in the life of the Romans of his day says: *αἱ δ' Ἀσκληπιοῦ χάριτες καὶ τῶν κατ' Αἴγυπτον θεῶν νῦν πλείστον εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἐπιδεδώκασιν*. For the position of the Egyptian gods in the second century A. D., cf. Wissowa, *Religion u. Kultus*, p. 355.

³ Cf. O. Deubner, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴ Cf. *I. G.*, IV², 1, no. 415; Latte, *Gnomon*, VII, 1931, p. 129. Latte, *ibid.*, p. 134, has drawn attention to the fact that no inscriptions can be traced to the period between 260-290 A. D. If this is indicative of a certain decline of the worship, the situation soon improved, as Latte himself has pointed out. Cos is not heard of after the second century A. D. However, it seems to have been in existence until 554, when it was demolished by an earthquake, cf. Herzog, *Kos*, p. XII.

Christian legend admits that Diocletian ordered the erection of new Asclepius temples, both in Pannonia and in Rome, and it tells how the Christian artists who refused to create an image of the god suffered martyrdom and death.⁵

The fourth century brought both reverses and successes. Constantine destroyed the sanctuary at Aegae. Holding the true Savior a jealous god, he commanded that this temple, too, be razed to its foundations: "At one nod it was stretched out on the ground . . . and with it (fell) the one lurking there, not a demon nor a god, but a kind of deceiver of souls, who had practiced his deceit for a very long time" (T. 818).⁶ The last inscription preserved from Epidaurus and dating from the year 355 A. D. was dedicated to the Asclepius of Aegae. It commiserates the destruction of his temple and raises a protest against it.⁷ Moreover, a general change is noticeable: the pagan religion was now adhered to above all by the educated, while it began to decline in popular appeal. Speaking of Aegae, Eusebius says: "The celebrated marvel of the noble philosophers [was] overthrown by the hand of the soldier" (T. 818). The Asclepius worship became esoteric. After Julian had assumed the purple, there seemed new hope even of winning back the masses. If the change in leadership was gratifying to all heathens, it must have been especially welcome to the followers of Asclepius, for the new emperor showed a marked preference for their god.⁸ When Julian passed through Tarsus, the priest of the Asclepieion in Aegae asked him to restore the pillars which the high priest of the Christians had carried off from the shrine to build with them a temple for his own people. "And the Apostate straightway commanded that this be done at the expense of the bishop." But the efforts of the heathens were to no avail. "With great toil and expenditure, then, the Greeks barely managed to take down one of the columns and bring it to the lintel of the doorway of the church by means of mechanical devices; yet in a long period of time they were unable to drag it further. Therefore they left it and went away. When

⁵ Cf. the so-called *Passio Sanctorum Quatuor Coronatorum*, ed. W. Wattenbach, *S. B. Berl.*, 1896, pp. 1281 ff.

⁶ For the temple at Aegae, cf. T. 816 ff. and J. Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums*, 1920, p. 279, n. 42; Latte, *op. cit.*, p. 121, n. 1. In Beroea in Syria, at approximately the same time, an Asclepius statue in the form of the beautiful son of Cleinias attracted so much attention among the pagans that the Christians destroyed the lovely monument, although it could not be proved that illegal services to the god were performed (T. 646).

⁷ *I. G.*, IV², 1, no. 438; Latte, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁸ Cf. G. Mau, *Die Religionsphilosophie Kaiser Julians*, 1908, pp. 66; 122.

Julian died, the bishop again easily lifted it up and restored it to its own place" (T. 820).⁹

The fate of Aegae was symbolic. To an ever increasing extent the sanctuaries of the pagans became quarries for the shrines of Christ. In Syria in the fifth century, the Asclepius cult seems to have been exterminated by the authorities. Nevertheless Theodoretus was afraid that in secret corners men continued to honor the god with libations and sacrifices (T. 5). In other sections, the faithful, though on the defensive, dared to express their belief openly. The Asclepius of Ascalon was worshipped even at that late date. The philosopher Proclus wrote a hymn in his honor (T. 826a; cf. 163). The same Proclus ascended to the Athenian Asclepieion to offer prayers and to invoke the help of the god (T. 582). At a time when the sanctuary of Athena Parthenos had already become a church, the temple of Asclepius was still frequented by the pious, by the intellectuals who clung to this god the longest.¹⁰

The temples of Asclepius, then, held out well nigh into the sixth century, the time at which even the last vestiges of paganism were finally stamped out all over the ancient world. The hero of physicians, who had become a god at the beginning of the classical period, proved to be as strong as those deities who were revered from time immemorial, if he was not even more powerful than they turned out to be. The temples of the Oriental gods withstood the onslaught of Christianity no longer than did the Asclepieia. The god of medicine who cured the sick had shown charity toward the poor, philanthropy toward all; he had been satisfied with small gifts in exchange for the greatest boon, health and freedom from disease; he had been mild and helpful, as he appeared to men in their dreams, and as he stood before their eyes in his statues. His deeds and his merits had endeared the son of Coronis to the ancients. That is why his divine abodes were among the last to fall.

⁹ It is noteworthy that a writer like Firmicus Maternus mentions Asclepius only casually (T. 114), but inveighs against the Oriental deities. In the fourth century, these foreign gods had the greatest attraction for the people at large, and that is why the main attack of the Christians now turned against the cults of Isis or Mithras or Sarapis.

¹⁰ Cf. Geffcken, *op. cit.*, p. 188. In this connection one must remember the importance which Asclepius assumed in late Neo-Platonic philosophy, cf. above, pp. 107 f.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Arch. Rel. Wiss.*: *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
C. M. G.: *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*
C. M. L.: *Corpus Medicorum Latinorum*
 L. Deubner, *Attische Feste*: *Attische Feste*, 1932
 ——— *Die Römer: Die Römer, Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, ed. A. Bertholet and E. Lehmann, II, 1925, pp. 418 ff.
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 ——— *Griech. Feste*: *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung (mit Ausschluss der attischen)*, 1906
 ——— *Griechische Religion*, I: *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, I, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*, 1941
 ——— *Popular Religion*: *Greek Popular Religion*, 1940
 Pauly-Wissowa: *Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
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- R. G. V. V.: *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*
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 ——— *Isyllos: Isyllos von Epidauros, Philologische Untersuchungen*, IX, 1886

INDEX OF TESTIMONIES *

- 1: 31, 36 (n. 52), 208 (n. 3)
vv. 1 ff.: 5
v. 7: 22, 62
vv. 8 ff.: 23
v. 13: 28 (n. 23)
v. 34: 35 (n. 45)
vv. 43 f.: 36
vv. 45 f.: 38, 43
vv. 47 ff.: 43 (n. 74), 44
vv. 54 ff.: 44, 47 (n. 84)
vv. 55 f.: 45
- 2:
vv. 612 ff.: 30 (n. 28)
v. 613: 30 (n. 29)
vv. 614 ff.: 30 (n. 28)
vv. 629 f.: 36
vv. 631 f.: 29
vv. 642 ff.: 47 (n. 87), 73 (n. 21)
vv. 647 f.: 75
- 3: 23, 26 (n. 11), 28 (n. 23), 30, 30 (n. 29),
37, 37 (n. 54), 43, 43 (n. 74), 44 (n. 76),
48, 48 (n. 90), 49 (n. 91), 49 (n. 93),
70 (n. 11), 120, 120 (n. 6)
- 3a: 44 (n. 76)
- 4: 46
- 5: 2, 24, 24 (n. 3), 38, 39 (n. 57), 44, 70 (n.
11), 73 (n. 20), 97 (n. 21), 98, 227,
227 (n. 7), 257
- 6: 78
- 7: 67, 73, 73 (n. 20), 74, 97, 189 (n. 21),
227, 227 (n. 7)
- 8: 70 (n. 12), 74 (n. 28), 91 (n. 2), 136
- 9: 73 (n. 20), 74 (n. 28), 227, 227 (n. 7)
- 11: 18, 71
- 12: 18
- 13: 71 (n. 13), 107 (n. 23)
- 14: 68, 72
- 15: 35 (n. 45)
- 17: 69 (n. 7), 72 (n. 20)
- 20: 71
- 21: 25, 34, 35 (n. 45)
- 22: 25-27, 28 (n. 20), 29, 34
- 23: 25 (n. 10), 28
- 24: 25, 25 (n. 8), 30, 35 (n. 45), 38
- 26: 37, 37 (n. 54)
- 27: 30 (n. 30), 34
- 28: 35 (n. 45)
- 29b: 160 (n. 11), 213 (n. 20)
- 30: 35 (n. 49)
- 31: 68, 69 (n. 8), 73, 121, 199 (n. 3), 210,
210 (n. 10)
- 32: 72, 73 (n. 21)
- 33: 70 (n. 10)
- 34: 32 (n. 37), 70, 70 (n. 11)
- 35: 70, 70 (n. 11)
- 36: 32, 32 (n. 36), 68, 69, 73, 121
- 37: 21, 21 (n. 77), 32, 32 (n. 37)
- 38: 18, 19 32
- 41: 29 (n. 26), 30, 31, 31 (n. 33)
- 42: 31, 31 (n. 33)
- 44: 29, 29 (n. 26), 30
- 45: 29, 29 (n. 26), 30
- 46: 29, 30 (n. 29)
- 47: 36, 36 (n. 52), 37 (n. 52)
- 48: 29, 36
- 49: 29
- 51: 38 (n. 55), 39, 138
- 52: 38 (n. 55)
- 53: 38 (n. 55)
- 54: 38 (n. 55)
- 55: 38 (n. 55)
- 56: 13, 38 (n. 55), 43, 43 (n. 74), 227
(n. 7)
- 57: 38 (n. 55)
- 58: 38 (n. 55)
- 59: 38 (n. 55)
- 60: 38 (n. 55)
- 61: 38 (n. 55)
- 62: 38 (n. 55)
- 63: 38, 39 (n. 57)
- 64: 38
- 65: 38, 39 (n. 57)
- 66: 45, 46
- 67: 47 (n. 84), 48
- 69: 40 (n. 64), 42 (n. 72), 48, 48 (n. 89),
211 (n. 14)
- 70: 40 (n. 64), 42 (n. 72), 51 (n. 100)
- 71: 42 (n. 72), 43 (n. 75), 50 (n. 95)
- 72: 211 (n. 14)
- 73: 211 (n. 11)
- 75: 44 (n. 76), 47 (n. 86), 75, 75 (n. 29),
75 (n. 31)
- v.* 748: 45
- vv.* 757 ff.: 46
- v.* 759: 48 (n. 90)
- 76: 47
- 77: 47
- 79: 47
- 83: 74 (n. 28)
- 86: 42 (n. 72)
- 87: 40, 40 (n. 64), 41

*I am greatly indebted to Miss Janet Brock for her kind assistance in preparing the indices.

- 88: 40 (n. 64), 41
 89: 41 (n. 70), 44 (n. 76)
 90: 41 (n. 70)
 91: 41 (n. 70)
 92: 3, 40 (n. 64), 41, 42 (n. 71)
 94: 134
 95: 134
 97: 45
 98: 43, 43 (n. 75)
 99: 44, 118 (n. 26), 211 (n. 14)
- 100: 44 (n. 79), 47 (n. 86)
 101: 50, 93 (n. 9)
 102: 49
 103: 132, 184 (n. 11)
 104: 45
 105: 26, 26 (n. 13)
 105a: 55 (n. 6)
 106: 25, 26, 26 (n. 13)
 107: 47 (n. 84)
 107a: 26 (n. 13), 33
 107b: 26, 26 (n. 13), 27, 27 (n. 18), 32 (n. 35)
 107c: 27
 108: 26 (n. 11)
 109: 45
 112: 75, 136
 113: 132
 114: 50 (n. 95), 257
 115: 49 (n. 94)
 116: 50
 117: 93 (n. 9)
 118: 50, 93 (n. 9)
 119: 50, 93 (n. 9)
 120: 50
 121: 45, 48 (n. 90), 51, 51 (n. 99)
 121a: 51, 51 (n. 99)
 121b: 51, 51 (n. 99)
 122: 51 (n. 99)
 123: 14 (n. 47), 59 (n. 20)
 124: 10, 14 (n. 47), 118 (n. 26), 179
 124a: 14 (n. 47)
 125: 10, 14 (n. 47)
 126: 45, 112 (n. 4)
 127: 2
 129: 3, 91, 91 (n. 1)
 130: 91 (n. 2)
 131: 91 (n. 2)
 132: 91 (n. 2)
 133: 91 (n. 2)
 134: 91 (n. 2)
 135: 2, 3 (n. 7), 8, 11, 15 (n. 50), 17, 17 (n. 61), 19 (n. 67), 78
 136: 3 (n. 7), 8, 8 (n. 24), 11, 15 (n. 50), 78
 137: 13 (n. 45)
 137a: 13 (n. 45)
- 137b: 13 (n. 45)
 137c: 13 (n. 45)
 137d: 13 (n. 45)
 139: 7, 9 (n. 28)
 140: 12 (n. 40), 13 (n. 43)
 141: 8, 12, 12 (n. 39), 13 (n. 43), 15, 15 (n. 51)
 142: 8, 12, 12 (n. 39), 13 (n. 43), 15, 15 (n. 51), 141 (n. 11)
 143: 14, 14 (n. 47), 14 (n. 49), 59 (n. 20), 141 (n. 11)
 144: 14 (n. 47)
 145: 10, 14 (n. 47), 141 (n. 9)
 146: 11 (n. 37), 14
 147: 14
 148: 13
 149: 14, 14 (n. 46)
 150: 13
 151: 13
 152: 42 (n. 71), 59 (n. 20)
 152a: 13
 152b: 13
 153: 13, 14 (n. 46)
 154: 13, 14 (n. 46)
 155: 13, 14 (n. 46)
 156: 21
 157: 21 (n. 75)
 158: 20
 159: 20
 160: 20
 161: 19, 98
 163: 257
 164: 3 (n. 6), 5, 16
 v. 194: 3, 92 (n. 3)
 vv. 201 f.: 2
 v. 202: 17, 19, 19 (n. 67)
 vv. 202 f.: 5
 v. 204: 59 (n. 20)
 vv. 218 f.: 43
 v. 219: 4
 165: 3 (n. 6), 6, 9 (n. 26), 16 (n. 53), 19
 vv. 505-6: 6 (n. 15)
 v. 515: 13 (n. 42)
 v. 518: 3
 166: 6, 9 (n. 26), 19
 166b: 19
 167: 6, 9 (n. 26), 19
 168: 6, 9 (n. 26), 19
 169: 21, 32 (n. 36), 87 (n. 43)
 170: 21
 173: 8, 8 (n. 20)
 174: 8
 175: 8
 176: 8
 177: 7, 8 (n. 25)
 178: 7, 13
 179: 7, 8 (n. 25)

- 180: 7, 8 (n. 25)
 v. 406: 8
 180a: 14
 181: 8, 84 (n. 29)
 182: 9
 183:
 v. 15: 8
 184: 2, 8, 9 (n. 26)
 185: 9 (n. 26)
 186: 8 (n. 20)
 186a: 21, 241
 187: 21, 87 (n. 44), 241
 188: 21, 187 (n. 44), 241
 189: 21
 190: 241
 191: 21
 192: 21 (n. 75), 59 (n. 21)
 193: 21 (n. 75)
 197: 9 (n. 28)
 198: 20 (n. 72)
 199: 8, 9, 9 (n. 26)

 200: 8
 201: 8, 9 (n. 26)
 203: 9 (n. 28)
 204: 9
 205: 20, 20 (n. 72)
 206: 20, 20 (n. 72), 150 (n. 20)
 207: 20 (n. 71), 20 (n. 72)
 208: 20 (n. 71)
 209: 19, 20
 209a: 20
 210: 160 (n. 11), 213 (n. 20)
 212: 20, 59 (n. 21)
 213: 20
 214: 20, 59 (n. 21)
 215: 20
 216: 20
 217: 20
 218: 20
 219: 54, 59
 220: 55, 56 (n. 11), 59
 221: 59
 222: 59
 223: 59
 224: 59
 225: 59
 226: 59
 227: 45 (n. 82)
 228: 58
 229: 57
 230: 57
 231: 56 (n. 8)
 233: 49, 49 (n. 91), 74 (n. 28), 75 (n. 29)
 234: 136
 235: 75
 236: 49 (n. 94), 75

 237: 75
 239: 77
 240: 77
 241: 77
 242: 75 (n. 29)
 243: 77, 92 (n. 3)
 244: 77
 245: 77, 92 (n. 3), 115 (n. 15)
 246: 77
 248: 77
 249: 78 (n. 4)
 251: 78
 254: 94
 255: 77 (n. 1), 78 (n. 6), 91, 91 (n. 3)
 257: 78, 92, 92 (n. 3)
 257a: 3 (n. 6)
 258: 84, 196 (n. 4)
 259: 84, 108, 136, 176
 260: 83, 150 (n. 23)
 261: 84
 262: 77, 83
 262a: 83
 263: 83
 264: 83, 103
 265: 38, 75 (n. 29), 76, 91, 118
 266: 80 (n. 13), 203 (n. 17)
 267: 80
 267a: 80 (n. 13)
 267b: 80 (n. 13)
 268: 82
 269: 81, 82
 270: 80
 271: 73 (n. 21), 74, 80, 82
 272: 73 (n. 21), 74, 80, 80 (n. 15), 81
 273: 73 (n. 21), 74, 80, 82
 274: 80
 275: 80
 276: 80
 277: 86
 279: 87 (n. 44), 90 (n. 54)
 281: 86
 281a: 86 (n. 42), 87 (n. 42)
 281c: 87 (n. 43)
 281d: 87 (n. 43)
 281e: 87 (n. 43)
 281f: 87 (n. 43)
 281g: 87 (n. 43)
 282: 17 (n. 59), 205
 I-2: 14 (n. 48)
 7: 78
 10: 13 (n. 41)
 11: 14 (n. 48), 78, 140 (n. 7)
 13: 14 (n. 48)
 15: 63, 78, 128 (n. 10)
 21: 78 (n. 7), 94
 22: 89
 24: 14

- 284: 88 (n. 48)
 285: 88
 287: 89 (n. 50)
 288: 87 (n. 43)
 289: 231
 291: 105
 292: 105, 135 (n. 8)
 293: 135 (n. 8)
 294: 105
 295: 103, 114 (n. 13), 120 (n. 3), 151 (n. 25)
 296: 103, 196
 297: 105, 252
 298: 106, 135 (n. 9)
 299: 106

 300: 106
 301: 105, 106
 302: 107
 303: 106, 107 (n. 21), 108, 136
 304: 107
 305: 108, 137
 306: 108
 307: 71, 108, 238
 308: 108 (n. 25)
 309: 108
 310: 108 (n. 25)
 311: 108 (n. 25)
 312: 108 (n. 25), 140 (n. 7)
 313: 108 (n. 25)
 314: 108 (n. 25)
 315: 107 (n. 22)
 316: 104
 317: 146, 204, 205.
 2: 190 (n. 24)
 4: 84 (n. 29), 107 (n. 22), 114 (n. 13), 120 (n. 3)
 5: 104, 112, 125 (n. 1)
 6: 124, 124 (n. 18)
 7: 112
 8: 154
 10: 104 (n. 13), 105, 153 (n. 32)
 11: 104, 165
 12: 207 (n. 31)
 318: 118, 118 (n. 27), 126, 149, 242
 319: 127, 242
 320: 113, 113 (n. 10), 132
 321: 116, 117
 322: 127
 323: 126, 206
 324: 126
 325: 129 (n. 15), 151 (n. 25), 153 (n. 31)
 326: 129 (n. 15)
 327: 129 (n. 15)
 328: 129 (n. 15), 151 (n. 25)
 329: 129 (n. 15)
 330: 129 (n. 15)

 331: 79, 252
 vv. 170 ff.: 129 (n. 15)
 332: 134
 332a: 132, 135 (n. 8)
 333: 132
 334: 134
 335: 136
 336: 137
 336a: 134 (n. 6)
 337: 203 (n. 17)
 338: 140
 339: 140
 340: 140
 341: 96 (n. 20), 140
 342: 140
 343: 140
 344: 140
 345: 140 (n. 5)
 346: 140
 347: 140
 348: 62, 141
 349: 141
 350: 140
 351: 140
 352: 140
 353: 140
 354: 10, 140
 355: 38 (n. 55), 96 (n. 20), 140, 141
 355a: 81 (n. 19)
 356: 38 (n. 55), 140, 141
 357: 140
 358: 140 (n. 7)
 359: 141
 360: 141
 361: 141
 362: 141 (n. 11)
 363: 141 (n. 12)
 364: 82 (n. 21), 141
 365: 141
 366: 104, 141
 367: 141
 368: 141
 369: 141, 171 (n. 38)
 370: 141
 371: 141
 372: 141
 373: 141
 374: 141
 375: 141
 376: 141
 377: 141
 378: 141 (n. 10), 228 (n. 10)
 379: 35 (n. 49), 69 (n. 7), 97, 141, 141 (n. 13)
 380: 35 (n. 49), 69 (n. 7)
 381: 140 (n. 7)
 382: 114 (n. 13), 148, 148 (n. 11), 254

383: 253, 254 (n. 12)
 385: 148, 234
 386: 148
 387: 148
 388: 204, 205
 391: 148
 392: 135 (n. 10), 169
 394: 113, 180
 395: 163, 179
 396: 179
 397: 149 (n. 15), 150, 163, 206 (n. 29)
 398: 180
 399: 161 (n. 14)

 400: 112, 255
 401: 171
 402: 112, 124, 124 (n. 18), 125, 126 (n. 4),
 129 (n. 15), 195, 213, 255
 403: 147
 404: 151 (n. 26), 169, 206 (n. 29)
 405: 154, 175, 176 (n. 11)
 406: 118
 407: 118, 120 (n. 3), 152, 153, 167
 408: 153, 154
 408a: 153
 409: 114 (n. 13), 153, 159
 410: 153, 167, 171
 411: 153, 188 (n. 12)
 411a: 188 (n. 12), 194 (n. 12)
 412: 153 (n. 31), 166
 413: 126 (n. 3), 153
 414: 56 (n. 8)
 415: 149 (n. 15)
 416: 157
 416a: 157
 417: 152, 154, 162
 418: 158
 419: 124, 124 (n. 18)
 420: 146, 211
 421: 146, 150 (n. 19), 211
 vv. 656 f.: 149 (n. 14)
 vv. 660 f.: 149 (n. 14)
 v. 663: 150
 vv. 668 f.: 150
 vv. 701 f.: 86
 vv. 701 ff.: 151 (n. 24)
 v. 706: 101 (n. 2)
 v. 710: 151 (n. 24), 153
 vv. 714 ff.: 150 (n. 23)
 v. 726: 179
 vv. 730 ff.: 153
 v. 731: 167 (n. 28)
 vv. 732 ff.: 153, 167
 v. 734: 229 (n. 12)
 v. 737 f.: 151
 421a: 48 (n. 89)
 422: 102 (n. 4), 113, 160 (n. 12), 164, 177

423: 86 (n. 40), 99, 121 (n. 9), 146, 151,
 156 (n. 39), 215 (n. 2), 236 (n. 13)
 1: 170 (n. 35)
 2: 170 (n. 35), 191
 3: 113, 150, 161, 167, 168, 170 (n. 35)
 4: 151, 152, 161
 5: 168, 188, 194 (n. 12)
 6: 153
 7: 113 (n. 8), 150 (n. 20), 161, 215 (n. 2)
 8: 151, 165, 168, 176 (n. 11)
 9: 153, 168 (n. 29)
 10: 170 (n. 35)
 11: 113 (n. 8), 168
 12: 152, 168
 13: 152, 166, 168 (n. 30)
 14: 168
 15: 168
 16: 168
 17: 151, 153, 164, 170 (n. 35)
 19: 167 (n. 28), 168 (n. 29)
 20: 168
 21: 148, 166, 166 (n. 26), 169 (n. 30)
 22: 168
 23: 102, 102 (n. 4), 151 (n. 24), 152, 161
 (n. 12), 166, 229, 246 (n. 15)
 24: 105, 151 (n. 25), 152
 25: 148 (n. 10), 150, 150 (n. 23), 151,
 152, 163, 165, 166 (n. 26), 169 (n. 30)
 26: 153, 170 (n. 35)
 27: 151 (n. 24), 152, 166, 166 (n. 26), 168
 28: 153
 29: 165, 168 (n. 29)
 30: 168
 31: 153, 167, 167 (n. 28), 170 (n. 35)
 32: 152, 168
 33: 121 (n. 9), 167 (n. 28), 170 (n. 34),
 230, 238, 246, 246 (n. 15)
 34: 170 (n. 35)
 35: 151, 162, 168
 36: 113 (n. 8)
 37: 162, 168
 38: 168
 39: 153, 167 (n. 28)
 41: 153, 167, 168, 169 (n. 30)
 42: 167 (n. 28), 170 (n. 35)
 43: 228 (n. 10)
 424: 99 (n. 31)
 425: 139 (n. 3), 147, 148, 151, 168, 170
 (n. 34)
 426: 152, 153 (n. 31), 166, 166 (n. 25),
 170 (n. 35)
 427: 150 (n. 20), 151, 153, 165, 206 (n. 29),
 214, 216
 428: 125, 136 (n. 15), 147, 202 (n. 14)
 429: 146, 152 (n. 28), 211
 430: 146, 152 (n. 28), 211
 vv. 246 ff.: 152

- 431: 86 (n. 40), 114 (n. 13), 151 (n. 24)
 432: 112, 147, 152, 153, 164, 165, 178, 188,
 194 (n. 10), 194 (n. 12), 204 (n. 24),
 237 (n. 15)
 433: 206 (n. 29)
 434: 153, 206 (n. 29)
 435: 153
 436: 112, 139 (n. 3)
 437: 179
 438: 114 (n. 13), 147, 153, 167, 169, 171,
 189 (n. 19), 193 (n. 7)
 439: 147, 153
 440: 147, 162
 441: 114 (n. 13), 147
 442: 147
 444: 119, 150 (n. 23), 162, 167 (n. 28),
 238, 247 (n. 19)
 445: 117, 146, 150, 150 (n. 23), 167 (n. 28),
 170, 206 (n. 29)
 446: 71, 146, 148 (n. 10), 150 (n. 23), 153,
 185
 447: 148, 150 (n. 23), 162, 170
 448: 150 (n. 23), 151, 151 (n. 25), 223, 229
 (n. 12), 231
 449: 164
 449a: 121 (n. 6), 164, 164 (n. 21)
 450: 164
 451: 164, 183 (n. 6)
 452: 164
 453: 130, 130 (n. 18), 164
 454: 164, 182
 455: 146, 206 (n. 29), 211
 456: 117, 146, 153, 206, 206 (n. 29), 211,
 216, 216 (n. 3)
 457: 119
 458: 118 (n. 28)
 459: 147
 460: 183 (n. 6)
 462: 146
 463: 124
 464: 124
 464a: 124
 464b: 124, 130
 465: 124
 466: 124, 193, 228 (n. 10)
 467: 128 (n. 10), 140 (n. 5)
 468: 45 (n. 81), 140, 140 (n. 5)
 469: 140 (n. 5)
 470: 140 (n. 5)
 471: 140 (n. 5)
 472: 140 (n. 5)
 473: 140 (n. 5)
 474: 140 (n. 5)
 475: 140 (n. 5)
 476: 140 (n. 5)
 477: 140 (n. 5)
 478: 140 (n. 5)
 479: 140 (n. 5)
 480: 140 (n. 5)
 481: 140 (n. 5)
 482: 152 (n. 27), 176 (n. 11), 188, 189, 194
 (n. 9), 216, 218, 235
 vv. 1-2: 148 (n. 12), 239
 vv. 1-18: 188
 v. 6: 87 (n. 44)
 vv. 7 ff.: 78
 vv. 11 ff.: 116
 v. 15: 190
 vv. 17 ff.: 151, 188 (n. 14)
 v. 19: 215 (n. 2)
 vv. 19-21: 235
 vv. 33 f.: 235
 vv. 38 ff.: 235
 v. 41: 188
 v. 54: 194
 vv. 55 f.: 193 (n. 9)
 vv. 56 ff.: 235
 vv. 57 f.: 236
 vv. 68-71: 235
 vv. 72 ff.: 235 (n. 9)
 vv. 79 ff.: 116, 175, 188
 vv. 80-81: 190
 vv. 83 ff.: 104
 v. 91: 188
 vv. 93-195: 189
 483: 193 (n. 7), 253
 484: 190
 485: 193, 193 (n. 9), 194
 486: 192 (n. 4)
 487: 192
 488: 72, 130, 192 (n. 3)
 489: 192 (n. 4)
 490: 187, 192 (n. 5)
 491: 192 (n. 4), 192 (n. 5)
 26: 194 (n. 10)
 491a: 192 (n. 5)
 491b: 192 (n. 5)
 491c: 192 (n. 5)
 491d: 192 (n. 5)
 491e: 192 (n. 5)
 492: 192 (n. 5), 217 (n. 8)
 492a: 192
 493: 192, 252 (n. 7)
 494: 192, 192 (n. 5)
 495: 192
 497: 152
 498: 141 (n. 12), 193 (n. 9)
 498a: 193 (n. 6)
 498b: 213 (n. 21)
 499: 176 (n. 13)
 500: 193 (n. 6), 228 (n. 10)
 501: 63 (n. 32), 184, 195 (n. 13), 215
 502: 182

- 503: 189 (n. 17)
 504: 178, 193 (n. 7)
 505: 183
 506: 181
 507: 179
 509: 183 (n. 7)
 510: 189, 240
 510a: 189
 511: 149 (n. 14), 186
 512: 203 (n. 19)
 513: 150 (n. 19)
 513a: 149 (n. 17), 251
 514: 187
 515: 88 (n. 45), 99 (n. 31), 186, 186 (n. 9),
 227 (n. 6), 227 (n. 7)
 516: 99, 99 (n. 32), 186, 191, 191 (n. 2),
 247 (n. 21)
 517: 187
 518: 188
 519: 128
 520: 188
 521: 188, 249
 522: 182 (n. 3)
 523: 190 (n. 23)
 524: 118, 130
 525: 130
 526: 131
 527: 130, 131
 528: 131 (n. 22)
 529: 131 (n. 22)
 530: 131 (n. 22)
 531: 131 (n. 22)
 532: 73 (n. 20), 189, 248 (n. 23)
 533: 189, 248 (n. 23)
 534: 189 (n. 21)
 535: 189 (n. 21), 189 (n. 22)
 536: 189 (n. 21)
 537: 182 (n. 3)
 538: 181, 185
 539: 190, 190 (n. 23)
 36: 215
 540: 173
 542: 190
 543: 190 (n. 25)
 544: 190
 545: 190
 546: 190 (n. 26), 218 (n. 14)
 547: 190 (n. 26), 198 (n. 12), 208 (n. 1),
 251
 547a: 198 (n. 12)
 548: 190 (n. 26), 251
 549: 190 (n. 26), 207 (n. 31)
 549a: 210
 550: 190 (n. 26)
 551: 190 (n. 26)
 552: 140, 184, 184 (n. 11), 197 (n. 7)
 553: 182, 183 (n. 8), 184 (n. 11), 194 (n.
 11), 195, 197
 554: 182, 195
 555: 183, 240
 556: 208, 208 (n. 3), 209 (n. 4)
 556a: 208 (n. 3)
 556b: 208 (n. 3)
 557: 208, 209 (n. 4)
 557a: 209
 558: 208
 559: 208, 209 (n. 3)
 560: 208, 209 (n. 4), 210
 561: 194 (n. 10), 197 (n. 9)
 562: 190 (n. 23), 192 (n. 4), 194 (n. 10),
 197, 197 (n. 9)
 563: 196
 564: 127, 195, 198 (n. 15), 238
 565: 127, 195, 198 (n. 15), 238
 565a: 128
 566: 195, 198, 207
 567: 196
 568: 140, 195, 196, 197 (n. 10), 229 (n. 11)
 569: 183 (n. 6), 195
 570: 184, 195
 571: 197, 198
 572: 195, 198
 573: 140, 212, 249
 574: 184
 575: 195
 577: 118 (n. 28), 182
 577a: 182 (n. 3), 185 (n. 2)
 578: 185, 185 (n. 1)
 579: 185
 580: 185
 581: 186
 582: 169, 185, 207, 257
 584: 134, 185
 585: 183 (n. 7), 185 (n. 2)
 586: 183 (n. 6)
 587: 72, 73 (n. 23), 117, 199, 207
 588: 202, 204, 207
 589: 203, 207
 590: 117, 199, 206, 207
 591: 207
 592: 68, 72, 74 (n. 23), 78, 83, 86, 87, 88
 (n. 45), 90 (n. 54), 124, 193, 200, 203
 (n. 19), 249
 592a: 68 (n. 5), 88 (n. 45), 203 (n. 19)
 593: 72, 73 (n. 22), 73 (n. 23), 78, 83, 86,
 87 (n. 43), 88 (n. 45), 115 (n. 15),
 196, 201
 593a: 101, 201
 594: 69 (n. 8), 70, 80, 121, 201
 595: 83 (n. 28), 203 (n. 17)
 596: 202 (n. 14)
 597: 202
 598: 193, 201

- 599: 218 (n. 14), 224, 224 (n. 21), 225, 225 (n. 24)
 600: 218 (n. 14), 224, 224 (n. 21), 225, 225 (n. 24)
 601: 89, 131, 201
 602: 193
 603: 202
 604: 202
 605: 202
 605a: 202
 606: 213 (n. 20)
 607: 203 (n. 19)
 608: 202, 204
 609: 204, 204 (n. 25)
 610: 206, 207
 611: 211 (n. 13)
 612: 211 (n. 13)
 613: 211 (n. 11)
 614: 203 (n. 17)
 615: 203 (n. 17)
 616: 207 (n. 31)
 617: 207
 618: 203 (n. 17)
 619: 203 (n. 17)
 620: 203 (n. 17)
 621: 203 (n. 17)
 622: 203 (n. 17)
 623: 90 (n. 54), 203 (n. 17)
 624: 203 (n. 17)
 625: 203 (n. 17)
 626: 203 (n. 17)
 627: 220
 630: 73 (n. 20), 216, 217, 218, 226
 631: 216
 632: 235 (n. 8)
 636: 216
 638: 216
 639: 215
 641: 215 (n. 1), 245 (n. 10)
 642: 215 (n. 1), 245 (n. 10)
 643: 215
 645: 217
 646: 217, 222, 256
 647: 217, 244
 648: 217, 237 (n. 16), 245
 649: 217, 219, 219 (n. 5), 226, 244
 650: 218 (n. 13)
 651: 215, 218
 652: 218, 219, 219 (n. 5), 247
 653: 215
 654: 214, 218, 219, 222, 246
 655: 218
 656: 246
 657: 19, 215, 218 (n. 14), 247
 658: 218
 659: 216 (n. 6), 218 (n. 14)
 660: 216, 218
 661: 215, 218, 218 (n. 14)
 662: 218 (n. 14), 248 (n. 23)
 663: 216, 218 (n. 14), 241
 665: 215, 218 (n. 14)
 666: 218 (n. 14)
 668: 216,
 668a: 215
 668c: 240, 241, 249 (n. 30)
 669: 217, 240 (n. 10)
 670: 216
 671: 96 (n. 20), 214, 216
 672: 216
 673: 216
 674: 216
 675: 216
 676: 216
 677: 216, 216 (n. 6)
 678: 217, 240 (n. 10)
 679: 216, 224
 680: 216
 681: 219
 682: 219
 683: 219 (n. 3), 219 (n. 4), 220, 249
 683c: 220
 684: 219 (n. 3), 220
 685: 219
 686: 217, 217 (n. 8)
 687: 192 (n. 5), 217, 217 (n. 8)
 690: 230
 691: 189 (n. 22), 225, 227, 227 (n. 7), 228
 692: 229, 230
 693: 231
 693a: 231
 694: 229
 695: 230
 696: 228 (n. 10)
 697: 228
 698: 228
 699: 228
 700: 228, 229
 700a: 229 (n. 12), 240 (n. 10)
 701: 228
 702: 228
 703: 230
 704: 51 (n. 99)
 704a: 51, 51 (n. 99), 228
 705: 228
 706: 228, 231
 707: 159 (n. 3), 233
 708: 233
 709: 238, 248
 712: 233
 713: 251
 714: 71 (n. 13), 97, 97 (n. 23), 239
 714b: 239, 239 (n. 5)
 715: 239

- 716: 247
 717: 247
 718: 248 (n. 23)
 718a: 103, 248 (n. 23)
 719: 96, 176 (n. 13), 197
 720: 66, 120 (n. 4), 246
 720a: 120 (n. 4), 127, 230
 721: 246
 722: 246, 250 (n. 33)
 723: 246
 724: 246
 725: 233, 246
 726: 246
 727: 246
 728: 246
 729: 177 (n. 16), 246
 730: 191, 228 (n. 10), 246
 731: 246
 732: 121 (n. 6)
 733: 208 (n. 3), 245, 250 (n. 33)
 735: 253
 736: 253
 737: 253
 738: 253
 739: 120 (n. 3), 172 (n. 41), 178, 233, 236, 253
 2: 43 (n. 76), 150 (n. 20), 235 (n. 8)
 4: 41 (n. 69), 74
 6: 225 (n. 24), 252 (n. 7), 254
 740: 253
 741: 253
 742: 253
 743: 253
 744: 253
 745: 246
 746: 250 (n. 33)
 747: 244 (n. 7)
 748: 238, 244 (n. 7)
 749: 89 (n. 50), 240
 750: 246 (n. 15)
 751: 246 (n. 15)
 752: 246 (n. 15)
 753: 241
 754: 241 (n. 12)
 755: 191, 241 (n. 12)
 756: 241 (n. 12)
 757: 191, 230, 238, 239 (n. 5), 241 (n. 12)
 758: 241 (n. 12)
 759: 233, 241 (n. 12)
 760: 241 (n. 12)
 761: 236 (n. 10), 241 (n. 12)
 762: 233, 241 (n. 12)
 763: 241 (n. 12)
 764: 241 (n. 12)
 764a: 159 (n. 3)
 765: 241 (n. 12)
 766: 241 (n. 12)
 767: 241, 249 (n. 30)
 768: 240 (n. 9)
 769: 240 (n. 9)
 770: 240 (n. 9)
 771: 240 (n. 9)
 772: 240 (n. 10), 245 (n. 9)
 773: 224, 240 (n. 10)
 774: 240 (n. 10), 247
 775: 240 (n. 10)
 776: 240 (n. 10)
 777: 240 (n. 10)
 778: 240 (n. 10)
 779: 245, 250 (n. 33)
 782: 248 (n. 24)
 783: 248 (n. 24)
 784: 248 (n. 24)
 785: 248 (n. 24)
 786: 249
 787: 193 (n. 6), 196, 247
 788: 249
 789: 249
 790: 250 (n. 31)
 791: 249
 792: 234
 793: 250 (n. 31)
 794: 249, 254
 794a: 103
 795: 249, 255
 796: 249, 254
 797: 249, 254
 798: 103, 192, 249, 254
 799: 249, 254
 801: 249
 802: 254
 803: 254
 804:
 5: 113, 177, 237 (n. 15)
 805: 237 (n. 15)
 806: 204
 809: 254
 816: 256 (n. 6)
 817: 234, 256 (n. 6)
 818: 133, 134, 256, 256 (n. 6)
 819: 256 (n. 6)
 820: 257
 821: 120 (n. 3), 251
 823: 252 (n. 6)
 825: 35 (n. 49), 252 (n. 6)
 826: 252, 252 (n. 6)
 826a: 202 (n. 15), 252 (n. 6), 257
 827: 251, 252, 252 (n. 6)
 828: 252
 829: 252
 830: 252
 831: 248
 832: 252

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 833: 252 | <i>vv. 654 ff.</i> : 219 (n. 4) |
| 834: 252 | <i>v. 656</i> : 220 |
| 835: 190 (n. 25), 252 | <i>v. 657</i> : 151 |
| 836: 252 | <i>vv. 671 f.</i> : 236 (n. 10) |
| 837: 252 | <i>v. 676</i> : 192 |
| 838: 252 (n. 7) | <i>v. 677</i> : 230 (n. 16) |
| 839: 249 (n. 30) | <i>v. 685</i> : 236 (n. 10) |
| 842: 253 (n. 8) | 851: 252 (n. 8) |
| 843: 253 (n. 8) | 852: 132 (n. 2), 252 (n. 8) |
| 844: 253 (n. 8) | 853: 252 (n. 8) |
| 845: 252 (n. 8) | 854: 252 (n. 8) |
| 846: 119, 230, 241, 252 (n. 8) | 855: 196 (n. 3), 252, 252 (n. 8) |
| 847: 252 (n. 8) | 855a: 196 (n. 3) |
| 848: 230 (n. 16), 252 (n. 8) | 856: 252 (n. 8) |
| 849: 252 (n. 8) | 857: 252 (n. 8) |
| 849b: 132 | 858: 103 (n. 10), 252 (n. 8) |
| 850: 238, 252 (n. 8) | 859: 252 (n. 8) |
| <i>vv. 631 ff.</i> : 121 (n. 9), 252 (n. 8) | 860: 252 (n. 8) |
| <i>v. 654 f.</i> : 151 | 861: 252 (n. 8) |

INDEX OF NAMES

- ACADEMICS 157
 ACAMAS 8
 ACACIUS 204
 ACARNANIA 248
 ACESIS 88, 89
 ACESO 87, 88, 89, 186
 ACHAIA 240, 248
 ACHILLES 4, 5, 8, 16, 19, 24, 41, 53, 124
 ACUSILAUS 25-28, 57
 ADMETUS 27, 33
 AEGAE 148, 203, 234, 238, 256, 257
 AEGINA 208, 245, 250
 AEGLE 87, 90, 200, 215
 AELIAN 29, 117, 146, 160, 161, 176, 191, 206, 215, 216
 AEMILIUS PAULUS 253
 AESCHINES 151, 206
 AESCHYLUS 11, 35, 44, 46, 47, 124, 204
 AETHIOPIS 15
 AFRICA 242
 AGAMEMNON 1, 5, 6, 13, 16, 53, 84
 AGENORIDAS 96
 AGRIGENTUM 249
 AIGLE 70, 72, 80
 AJAX 8, 12, 13, 63
 ALCAMENES 217, 244
 ALCESTIS 27, 33
 ALCIBIADES 217, 222
 ALCMENE 28
 ALCUIN 134
 ALEXANDER SEVERUS 179
 ALEXANDER THE GREAT 120, 198, 241, 251, 252
 ALEXANDRIA 252
 ALEXANOR 21, 87, 240, 241
 AMBRACIA 247
 AMELESAGORAS 42, 51
 AMPELIUS 50
 AMPHIARAUS 88, 89, 93, 94, 149, 150, 248
 AMPHISSA 103
 AMYRUS 35
 ANAXANDRIDES 27
 ANDROGEON 42
 ANDROMACHUS 203
 ANTICLEIA 21
 ANTIPHANES 211
 ANTIUM 253
 ANTONINUS (Senator) 120, 178, 237, 254
 ANTONINUS PIUS 254
 APELLAS 128, 164, 172, 204, 237
 APELLES 235, 236
 APHRODITE 47, 86, 89, 100, 216, 237
 APOLLO 1, 12, 26, 28-31, 33, 50, 52, 55, 56, 75, 76, 85, 99-103, 105, 108, 122, 126, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 140, 186, 188, 191-193, 196, 197, 199, 200, 204, 205, 211, 213, 218, 219, 233-235, 243, 249, 250
 — ALEXIKAKOS 120
 — DELPHIC 27, 32, 36, 37, 100, 103, 182
 — EGYPTIAN 252
 — GOD OF MEDICINE 36, 45, 56
 — MALEATAS 99, 100, 186, 187, 233
 — PHYSICIAN 37, 81
 — SON OF (Asclepius) 23, 24, 33, 35, 38, 51, 62, 67, 68, 72, 74, 80, 93, 96, 121, 127, 136, 207, 225, 242, 246, 251
 APOLLODORUS, the HISTORIAN 3, 18, 24, 39, 70, 71, 73, 78, 92, 97, 98, 105, 227
 APOLLODORUS, the MYTHOGRAPHER 23, 28, 37, 43, 48, 49, 70
 APOLLODORUS, the POET 185
 APOLLONIUS 186, 187, 206
 APOLLONIUS RHODIUS 35, 39
 APOLLOPHANES 120
 APOLLOPHANES, the ARCADIAN 69
 APOLOGISTS 132, 135, 255
 APULIA 20
 APULEIUS 120, 202, 204
 ARATUS 51, 173
 ARATUS, of SICYON 87
 ARCADIA 43, 50, 69, 72, 73, 93, 96, 224, 237, 240-242, 244, 247
 ARCHIAS 249
 ARCTINUS 12, 15
 ARES 34, 86, 89
 ARESTHANAS 73
 ARGIVES 209, 245
 ARGOLID 21, 242, 244, 246
 ARGONAUTS 39, 41
 — VOYAGE of the 10, 38-40, 42
 ARGOS 3, 41, 43, 70, 98
 — KINGS of 7, 241, 245
 ARISTARCHUS 206, 211
 ARISTARETE 218
 ARISTETES 35
 ARISTIDES 14, 17, 70, 78, 84, 104, 105, 107, 114, 120, 121, 124-126, 129, 130, 136, 140, 143, 146, 151-153, 158, 162, 164, 170, 173, 178, 188, 190, 192-194, 197, 198, 202, 204-207, 213, 255
 ARISTODAMA 87
 ARISTOPHANES 86, 101, 145, 146, 150, 151, 179, 187, 211, 245
 ARISTOTLE 18, 21, 55, 59, 140, 157, 208, 245
 ARNOBIUS 132, 184, 220

- ARSINOË 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 33, 50, 54, 68-70, 87, 241
 ARSIPPUS 35, 50
 ARTEMIDORUS 29, 130, 136, 164
 ARTEMIS 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 47, 83, 237
 ASCALON 252, 257
 ASCLEPIADES 32
 ASCLEPIADES, the PHYSICIAN 45
 ASCLEPIADS 9, 10, 12-15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 41, 42, 54-63, 78, 87, 122, 140, 164, 205, 209
 ASIA MINOR 20, 193, 205, 209, 243, 248, 250
 ASKLES 74, 80, 81
 ASKLETOS 80
 ATHENA 23, 30, 43, 56, 57, 100, 120, 121, 132, 160, 164, 191, 198, 215, 218, 230, 234, 236, 238, 257
 — HYGIEIA 90
 ATHENAEUS 91, 92, 114, 126
 ATHENIANS 88, 92, 113, 120, 127, 185, 191
 ATHENS 21, 62, 65, 66, 90, 99, 116, 119-121, 127, 147, 149, 150, 153, 182, 184, 186, 187, 189, 193, 195-198, 203, 207, 210, 227, 230, 245, 246, 252
 ATTALUS 182, 195
 ATTICA 87, 248
 AUGUSTUS 51
 AUGUSTINE 136

 BACCHYLIDES 28
 BALAGRAE 238, 248, 249
 BEROEA 256
 BERYTUS 252
 BOEBAEAN LAKE 25, 35
 BOEOTIA 248
 BOËTHUS 218, 224, 225
 BRYAXIS 218, 246
 BYBASSUS 20

 CAELIUS AURELIANUS 82
 CAESAR 254
 CAESAR GERMANICUS 51
 CALAMIS 217, 219, 223, 226, 244
 CALCHAS 20
 CALLIMACHUS 29, 45, 56, 73, 82, 155
 CALLISTRATUS 220-223
 CALYDONIAN HUNT 10, 38, 39
 CAPANEUS 40, 41, 47
 CARIA 19, 20, 59, 62
 CARTHAGINIANS 252
 CECROPS 200
 CELSUS, the PHILOSOPHER 105, 135
 CELSUS, the PHYSICIAN 166, 206
 CENCHREAE 250
 CEPHISODOTUS 218, 236
 CHIRON 4, 5, 13, 16, 17, 23, 25, 31, 35, 38, 39, 44, 45, 52, 59, 62, 63, 73, 96, 138, 201, 227
 CHIRONIDAE 5, 59
 CHRIST (see also JESUS) 74, 131-138, 145, 161, 181, 224, 225, 229, 257
 — CHILD 73
 CHRISTIAN FATHERS 75, 91, 135
 CHURCH FATHERS 132, 135, 136
 CICERO 50, 74, 83, 155, 157
 CILICIANS 187, 234
 CINESIAS 211
 CLAUDIUS 254
 CLEMENT 39, 50, 93, 137
 PS. CLEMENT 50, 93
 CNIDUS 20, 70, 144
 COANS 96
 COLOTES 217, 237, 245
 CONCORD 215
 CONSTANTINE 256
 CORINTH 237, 246, 247
 CORNUTUS 228
 CORONIDAE 37
 CORONIS 23-37, 50-52, 54, 55, 64, 67, 68, 70-74, 80, 87, 93, 121, 184, 200, 213, 235, 240, 242, 252, 257
 COS 15, 20, 65, 71, 86, 105, 144, 148, 150, 152, 160, 189, 191, 194, 196, 197, 203, 209, 216, 229, 234, 236, 239, 240, 243, 249, 254, 255
 — STATUE 219
 — TEMPLE 188, 218, 237
 CRETANS 234
 CRETE 249
 CRITO 130
 CROTON 253
 CYCLADES 249
 CYCLIC EPIC 8, 10, 42
 CYCLOPS 25-27, 30, 31, 33
 CYLLENE 237, 245, 250
 CYNNO 189
 CYNOSURA 50, 93
 CYRENE 189, 248, 249

 DAEDALIDAE 57, 61
 DAEDALUS 57, 62, 94, 141
 DAMOPHON 218
 DARES 14
 DAUNIA 20
 DELOS 182, 234, 249
 DELPHI 20, 26, 27, 30-32, 36, 43, 50, 68-71, 82, 97, 110, 121, 122, 127, 155, 182, 183, 210, 234, 241, 246, 248
 DELPHIC ORACLE 69, 70, 73, 98, 120, 121, 131, 240, 242, 252
 DEMETER 69, 78, 96, 127-129, 214, 215, 230
 DEMETRIUS POLIORCETES 92, 114
 DEMOCEDES 45, 56, 81
 DEMOCRITUS 82
 DEMOSTHENES 80, 198

- DICAЕARCHUS 5
 DICTYS 14
 DIOCLES 126
 DIOCLETIAN 256
 DIODORUS 46, 96, 128
 DIOGENES, the CYNIC 185
 DIOGENES LAERTIUS 45, 163
 DIOMEDES 7
 DION 118
 DIONYSIUS, the ARTIST 245
 DIONYSIUS HALICARNASENSIS 155
 DIONYSIUS, of SYRACUSE 179, 202, 220
 DIONYSUS 37, 45, 122, 224, 226, 230
 DIOPHANTUS 125, 136, 202
 DIOSCURI 14, 77, 78
 DIUM 203, 238
 DOMNINUS 206
 DOTIAN PLAIN 25, 34, 35, 68, 98

 EËTION 218
 EGYPT 56, 59, 160, 203, 252
 ELAEA 182, 195
 ELATEIA 103, 248
 ELATUS 25, 35
 ELEUSINIAN GODDESSES 179, 188, 246
 — PRIESTS 255
 — RITUAL 197
 ELEUSIS 83, 127-129, 190, 246
 ELIS 245
 EMPEDOCLES 45
 EMPORION 218
 ENNIUS 11
 EPEIUS 8
 EPHEBUS 212, 237, 248
 EPICARMUS 126
 EPICETUS 118, 254
 EPICUREANS 114, 124, 154-157
 EPICURUS 115, 161
 EPIDAUROS 66, 67, 72-74, 80, 88-90, 97-99,
 102, 104, 105, 108, 109, 120-122, 136,
 140, 141, 148, 149, 152, 153, 160, 178,
 186, 187, 189, 191-194, 196, 197, 201,
 203, 208-211, 213, 225, 226, 229, 232,
 235-237, 240-245, 247-256
 — BIRTHPLACE of ASCLEPIUS 69-71, 232,
 234
 — GRAVE of ASCLEPIUS 50, 93
 — INSCRIPTIONS 86, 105, 114, 117, 143,
 147, 148, 151, 156, 161, 164, 166, 168,
 170, 176, 215, 244, 246
 — LEGEND 68, 72, 77, 81, 227
 — MIRACLES 99
 — MYTH, see LEGEND
 — SANCTUARY, see TEMPLE
 — SNAKE 230, 231
 — STATUE 216, 217, 219, 227
 — TABLETS, see INSCRIPTIONS

 — TEMPLE 43, 65, 72, 118, 126, 137, 144,
 146, 158, 159, 172, 230, 237-239
 EPIDAUROS LIMERA 230, 238
 EPIO 87
 EPIONE 86-88, 128, 187, 200, 216, 235
 EPIRUS 247
 ERATOSTHENES 51
 ERECHTHEUS 100, 120, 192
 ERETRIA 193
 ERIOPIS 32
 ERYTHRAE 74, 188, 238, 249
 ERYTHRAEAN HYMN 200, 203
 ERYXIMACHUS 62, 105
 ESMOUN 252
 EUAMERION 88, 89
 EUARESTOS 147
 EUBOEA 247
 EUNAPIUS 45
 EURIPIDES 44, 47, 48, 56, 211, 236
 EUROPA 28
 EURYPYLUS 6-8, 11, 14, 203
 EUSEBIUS 132, 135, 256
 EUSTATHIUS 15, 35

 FESTUS 227
 FIRMICUS MATERNUS 50, 257
 FRONTO 118

 GALEN 92, 112, 113, 115, 118, 126, 139, 141,
 147, 158, 167, 169, 171, 175, 203
 GERENIA 21, 239, 240
 GLAUCUS 42, 44, 47, 51, 228
 GORGASUS 21
 GORGON 23, 43, 120
 GORTYS 219, 241, 247, 249

 HADES 45, 46, 48, 52, 75, 128, 130, 184, 202
 HADRIAN 118, 254
 HALIEIS 121, 230, 238, 246
 HARPOCRATES 225
 HECATE 216, 230
 HELEN 13, 42
 HELIADS 87
 HELIUS 48, 85, 87, 216, 225
 HELLANICUS 57
 HEMERA 216
 HEPHAESTUS 35, 56, 57, 79, 198
 HERA 48, 132, 226
 HERACLES 3, 40-42, 45, 62, 74, 77, 78, 84,
 87, 91, 103, 121, 122, 138, 216, 217, 219,
 239
 HERACLIDS 205
 HERMES 37, 113, 126, 130, 186, 224, 226
 HERMES TRISMEGISTOS 129
 HERMOCRATES 206
 HERMODICUS 114
 HERODES ATTICUS 178

- HERODOTUS 45, 81, 115, 160, 164, 239
 HERONDAS 104, 148, 152, 176, 188, 190, 193,
 215, 234, 235, 236, 239, 240
 HEROPHILUS 123, 141
 HESIOD 1, 21, 24-30, 32, 34-36, 40, 41, 43,
 49-56, 61-63, 65, 67, 70, 72, 73, 76, 78,
 83, 84, 87, 98, 100, 122, 190, 230
 HESTIA 226
 HIPPOCRATES 20, 58, 59, 63, 81, 82, 87, 95, 96,
 112, 113, 128, 135, 139, 141, 157, 158,
 162, 166, 169, 171, 228, 254
 HIPPOCRATICS 167, 170, 250
 HIPPOLYTUS 40, 41, 47, 74, 211, 214, 222,
 223, 236
 HIPPONOË 87
 HIPPIYS 102, 160, 164
 HOMER 1-19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29, 31-33, 35,
 38, 39, 42-44, 46, 56-58, 61-63, 65, 71,
 78, 91, 92, 94, 95, 98, 99, 122, 124, 140,
 186, 223, 226, 230, 240, 250
 — CATALOGUE OF SHIPS 11, 12, 18, 21
 — HYMNS 32, 33, 68-70, 72, 121, 199, 210
 HOMERIDAE 57, 59-61
 HYGIEIA 87-90, 106, 124, 182, 193, 200-
 202, 214-216, 235, 245
 — EGYPTIAN 252
 HYGINUS 18, 36, 39, 51
 HYMENAEUS 42, 47
 HYPATA 240
 HYPERBOREANS 43
 HYPERIDES 211

 IANISCUS 87
 IASO 87-89, 151, 186, 200, 215, 235
 IASON 135
 IDOMENEUS 6
 ILIAS PARVA 8
 ILIUPERSIS 15
 ILLYRIA 248
 IMHOTEP 79, 252
 IMOUTHES 129, 252
 INDIA 160
 ION 87, 210
 IPHICLES 41
 ISCHYS 23, 25, 27-31, 35, 37
 ISIS 133, 216, 225, 257
 ISOCRATES 128
 ISODEMUS 202
 ISTER 73, 92, 238
 ISYLLUS 69, 70, 72, 80, 90, 99, 103, 104,
 114, 120, 121, 191, 196, 201, 241, 242,
 247
 ITALY 159, 197
 ITHOME 2, 10, 17-19
 IXION 34
 JASON 25, 39, 40
 JESUS (see also CHRIST) 75, 134
 JULIAN 71, 96, 113, 126, 137, 146, 238, 253,
 256, 257
 JUNO 215
 JUPITER 184
 JUSTINUS 134, 136

 KORE 128, 215, 230

 LACEDAEMON (see also LACONIA) 50
 LACEDAEMONIANS 69, 103, 242
 LACERIA 35
 LACHESIS 72
 LACONIA 32, 41, 158, 241
 LACTANTIUS 132
 LAMPETIA 87
 LAMPSACUS 198
 LAPITHAS 35
 LARISSA 246
 LEBENA 147, 148, 152, 153, 234, 238, 249
 LETO 26, 28, 213, 216, 244
 LEUCIPPUS 32
 LIBANIUS 169, 189, 207, 217, 222
 PS. LIBANIUS 215
 LIBYANS 234
 LIVY 160, 254
 LOCRI 247
 LUCIAN 37, 75, 105, 118, 130, 160, 204, 207,
 213, 220, 225
 LUCRETIUS 115
 LUSIUS 50
 LYCAONIANS 155
 LYCURGUS 40, 41, 47, 115
 LYDUS 50

 MACEDONIA 203, 242
 MACEDONIUS 73, 88, 201
 MACHAON 2-17, 19-21, 24, 32, 39, 41, 42,
 53, 54, 57-59, 61, 62, 78, 85, 87, 98, 128,
 141, 151, 200, 203, 205, 215, 235, 240,
 241
 MACROBIUS 106
 MAGNESIA 96
 MAGNESIANS 5
 MALEAS 186
 MALEATAS (see also APOLLO MALEATAS)
 209, 227
 MANTINEA 244, 245, 250
 MARCELLUS 203
 MARCUS AURELIUS 118, 120, 187, 185
 MARINUS 146
 MARPESSA 28
 MEDEA 63
 MEDITRINA 184
 MEGALOPOLIS 237
 MEGARA 246, 247
 MELAMPUS 42, 48

- MELEAGER 34
 MELOS 218
 MEMPHIS 105, 252
 MENANDER 124, 185
 MENECRATES 91
 MENELAUS 1, 4-7, 14, 16, 20, 53
 MENSCHIEH 203
 MEROPS 86
 MESSENE 247
 MESSENIA 17-21, 32, 33, 39, 54, 62, 68, 69,
 71, 72, 239-241, 247
 METROPOLIS 18
 MICYTHUS 215, 245
 MINOS 42
 MITHRAS 133, 257
 MITHRIDATES 254
 MOSES 91
 MUNYCHIA 226, 227
 MUSONIUS 114, 137
 MYCENE 7
 MYRON 217, 218

 NAUPACTICA 40, 41
 NAUPACTUS 103, 119, 238, 247
 NEBRIDAE 59
 NEOCLIDES 179
 NEO-PLATONISTS 107, 108, 130, 131, 137,
 214, 257
 NEOPTOLEMUS 42
 NEO-PYTHAGOREANS 136
 NEREIDS 87
 NERO 203
 NESTOR 6, 9, 11, 13, 19, 21, 39
 NEW CARTHAGE 252
 NICANDER 29, 41, 44
 — SCHOLION 43
 NICERATUS 218
 NICIAS 184, 216
 NICOMACHUS 21
 NICOMEDES 225
 NIOBE 30

 OCEANUS 87
 ODYSSEUS 53, 124
 OECHALIA 2, 10, 17-19
 OLYMPIA 215, 234, 245
 OLYMPIANS 52, 84, 110, 129, 205
 OMPHALION 218, 247
 OPHIUCHUS 51
 ORCHOMENOS 103
 ORIBASIIUS 45
 ORIGENES 75, 84, 135
 ORION 42, 47
 OROPUS 149
 ORPHEUS 45
 ORPHIC HYMN 131, 201
 ORPHICS 42, 87, 110, 202

 OVID 29, 30, 36, 37, 39, 44, 46-48, 75, 230,
 236

 PAEAN 182, 220
 PAEON 56, 57
 PAEONII 56
 PALAEMON 192
 PANACEA 44, 87-89, 151, 186, 200, 215, 235
 PANNONIA 256
 PANYASSIS 42
 PARIS 6
 PAROS 198, 240, 249
 PATROCLUS 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 16
 PAULUS OF SAMOSATA 136
 PAUSANIAS 32, 41, 67-69, 73, 77, 78, 87-89,
 91, 92, 96, 105, 106, 120, 149, 150, 160,
 191, 192, 205, 219, 226, 227, 230, 234-
 238, 244, 245, 247, 252
 PELEUS 4
 PELION 35, 63, 228
 PELOPONNESE 240, 242-246, 248
 PENTHESILEA 7, 8
 PERGAMUM 65, 71, 89, 105, 107, 119, 146,
 148, 150, 151, 153, 158, 160, 166, 176,
 182-184, 192, 194-197, 203, 211, 234, 238,
 249, 252, 254, 255
 — STATUE 218, 219
 — TEMPLE 125, 144, 193, 237
 PERICLES 120
 PERSEUS 51, 121
 PHAEDRA 47
 PHAËTON 100
 PHERECYDES 25, 26, 34, 35, 38, 43, 50, 97
 PHIDIAS 121, 216, 217, 218, 222, 223
 PHILETAERUS 211
 PHILIP 103
 PHILOCTETES 8, 12, 13, 40-42
 PHILOSTRATUS 124, 149
 PHINEUS 42, 48
 PHINIDAE 40, 42
 PHLEGYANS 34, 65, 200
 PHLEGYAS 28, 30, 34, 35, 52, 68, 224
 PHOCIANS 96
 PHOCIS 96, 97, 248
 PHOCUS 96
 PHOENICIA 252
 PHOENICIANS 106
 PHYLARCHUS 42, 48
 PHYROMACHUS 218
 PINDAR 1, 5, 23, 24, 28-31, 35-39, 43, 44,
 47, 49, 57, 62, 66, 118, 208, 209
 — SCHOLION 47
 PIRAEUS 86, 186, 250
 PISISTRATUS 160
 PLATO 10, 14, 44, 45, 59, 62, 105, 107, 112,
 114, 118, 119, 124, 126, 127, 149, 155,
 173, 174, 179, 198, 199, 208-210

- PLATONISTS 136
 PLAUTUS 141, 146, 152, 185, 211
 PLINY 5, 45, 114
 PLUTARCH 5, 29, 96, 118, 155, 156, 178, 184, 206, 214, 233
 PLUTUS 151, 179
 PODALIRIUS 2, 5, 7-17, 19-21, 41, 42, 53, 57-59, 62, 78, 85, 87, 98, 128, 141, 150, 151, 200, 205, 213, 215, 235, 239
 POLEMOCRATES 21
 POLEMON 206
 POLYCLITUS 217, 218, 237
 POLYIDES 42
 PORPHYRY 107, 126, 135, 136, 181, 190, 204
 POSEIDON 12, 15-17, 69, 157, 197, 226, 250
 POSIDONIUS 157
 POST-HOMERICA 8, 12
 PRAXAGORAS 166
 PRAXITELES 218, 235, 244
 PROCLUS 71, 140, 150, 184, 185, 202, 206, 257
 PROETIDAE 42
 PROETUS 42, 48
 PROMETHEUS 48, 49, 52, 96, 198, 214
 PROPERTIUS 42
 PRUSIAS 254
 PTOLEMAIS 238, 251
 PYRALLIANUS 107
 PYRRHUS 247
 PYTHO 25
- QUINTILIAN 174
 PS. QUINTILIAN 174
 QUINTUS SMYRNAEUS 8, 9, 20, 84
- RHODES 87, 203
 ROME 119, 120, 121, 147, 189, 230, 238, 241, 247, 252, 253, 255, 256
 ROMULUS 77, 78
 RUFINUS 254
 RUFUS 118, 139, 147, 158
- SABAZIUS 230
 SALAMIS 21
 SALUS 159
 SAMOTHRACE 163
 SARAPIS 129, 153, 206, 216, 257
 ——— -HELIUS 225
 SARONIAN GULF 245
 SCEPTICS 154, 155
 SCOPAS 218, 219, 247
 SCRIBONIUS LARGUS 63, 113
 SEMELE 37
 SENECA 214
 SERENUS SAMMONICUS 203
 SERVIUS 30, 36, 51, 160
 SEXTUS EMPIRICUS 74, 123
- SICILY 249
 SICYON 87, 219, 230, 238, 244
 SIDON 252
 SMYRNA 238
 SOCRATES 118, 130, 131, 132, 190, 203, 210
 SOCRATES, of ARGOS 70
 SOCRATES, the PAINTER 218
 SOPHOCLES 3, 40, 42, 48, 51, 59, 73, 117, 124, 199, 200, 203, 207
 SORANUS 82, 96, 166
 SPARTA 33, 103, 114, 151, 216, 242
 SPHYRUS 21, 241
 STAPHYLUS 211
 STESICHORUS 40, 47
 STIRIS 103
 STOICS 107, 114, 123, 124, 154, 155, 178, 214
 STRABO 18, 35, 71, 96, 239, 240, 245, 253
 STRATO 218, 241
 SULLA 253
 SYDYKUS 35
 SYRACUSANS 182, 249
 SYRACUSE 202, 220
 SYRIA 256, 257
 SYRNA 20
 SYROS 104
- TARENTUM 238, 253
 TARQUITIUS 227
 TARSUS 256
 TARTARUS 26, 32
 TATIAN 44
 TEGEA 43, 245, 250
 TELEMACHUS 120, 127
 TELEPHUS 13, 203
 TELESARCHUS 42
 TELESOPHUS 88, 89, 108
 TELESTES 211
 TERENCE 185
 TERTULLIAN 132
 TETHYS 87
 THALES 140
 THAMYRIS 19, 49
 THASOS 104, 249
 THEBES 41, 47
 ———, EGYPT 252
 THEMIS 237
 THEMISTIUS 208, 233
 THEOCRITUS 195
 THEODORETUS 39, 257
 THEOGNIS 54, 55
 THEOPHRASTUS 118, 126, 140
 THEOPOMPUS 20, 59, 211, 215, 216
 THERA 240
 THESEUS 41, 42, 47, 74
 THESIDAE 41
 THESPIAE 103
 THESSALUS 239

- | | |
|---|---|
| THESSALY 17-20, 25, 34, 39, 63, 66, 68, 70,
71, 92, 98, 200, 205, 239, 240, 243, 246-
248 | TROJAN HORSE 9 |
| THOAS 8 | TROJAN WAR 19, 39, 41, 42, 78, 243 |
| THOME 18 | TROPHONIUS 84, 93, 94, 149, 150, 151, 230,
248 |
| THRACE 34, 246 | TROY 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 21, 24, 39, 41, 42, 78,
205 |
| THRASYMEDES 217, 218, 219, 226, 227, 230,
243 | TYNDAREUS 42, 47 |
| TIBER ISLAND 103, 158, 252 | TYRUS 96 |
| TIBERIUS 51, 254 | VIRBIUS 47 |
| TIMAEUS 20 | VIRGIL 225 |
| TIMARCHIDES 218, 248 | VITRUVIUS 159, 223 |
| TIMARCHUS 218, 236 | XANTHE 21, 32, 87 |
| TIMOCLES 218, 248 | XANTHIPPIUS 96 |
| TIMOTHEUS 218, 219, 246 | XENOPHANES 57, 74 |
| TITANE 87, 89, 90, 106, 183, 189, 229, 240,
241, 246 | XENOPHILUS 218, 241 |
| TITHOREA 96, 103, 189, 248 | XENOPHON 43, 77, 160, 227 |
| TRICCA 2, 10, 17-19, 50, 66, 97-99, 105, 148,
186, 191, 203, 234, 240, 241, 249 | XENOPHON, of Cos 254 |
| —— BIRTHPLACE of ASCLEPIUS 71 | ZEUS 1, 23, 25-27, 30-32, 35, 46-50, 52, 62,
75, 76, 91, 93, 101, 104, 107, 108, 132,
134, 136, 179, 205, 215-218, 221, 226,
229, 233, 234 |
| —— TEMPLE 65, 71, 232, 239, 243, 247 | —— ASCLEPIUS 84, 107 |
| TRICE 2, 5, 6, 17 | —— KTESIOS 104 |
| TRIOPS 215 | |
| TRIPTOLEMUS 78, 128 | |
| TROIZEN 102, 223, 229, 246 | |

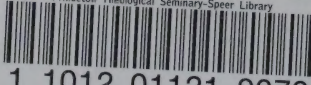
ERRATA

- Vol. I, p. 4, T. 1, l. 16: read *sores* for *sore*.
 Vol. I, p. 450, T. 855, l. 1: omit ? after 291 B. C.
 Vol. I, p. 459: add *4th century A. D.* after Fasti Philocali.
 Vol. II, p. 69, l. 9 and note 8, l. 6: read *Apollophanes* for *Apollodorus*.
 Vol. II, p. 87, note 43, l. 19: read *Tethys* for *Thetys*.

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